

# Rolling Stone

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**GOLDMAN SACHS**

**CAN THE FEDS  
SLAY THE GREAT  
VAMPIRE SQUID?**

*By Matt Taibbi*

**Ke\$ha**

**Confessions  
of a Party  
Animal**

**Green  
Day**

**Punks  
Conquer  
Broadway**

*Plus*

**MELISSA  
ETHERIDGE**

**THE HOLD  
STEADY**

**COURT  
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**Robert  
Downey Jr.**  
**Hardass,  
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Jim Fiscus *for* ESPN The Magazine



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Think of it this way: during the 12-year life of Google, magazine readership actually increased 11 percent.

What it proves, once again, is that a new medium doesn't necessarily displace an existing one. Just as movies didn't kill radio. Just as TV didn't kill movies. An established medium can continue to flourish so long as it continues to offer a unique experience. And, as reader loyalty and growth demonstrate, magazines do.

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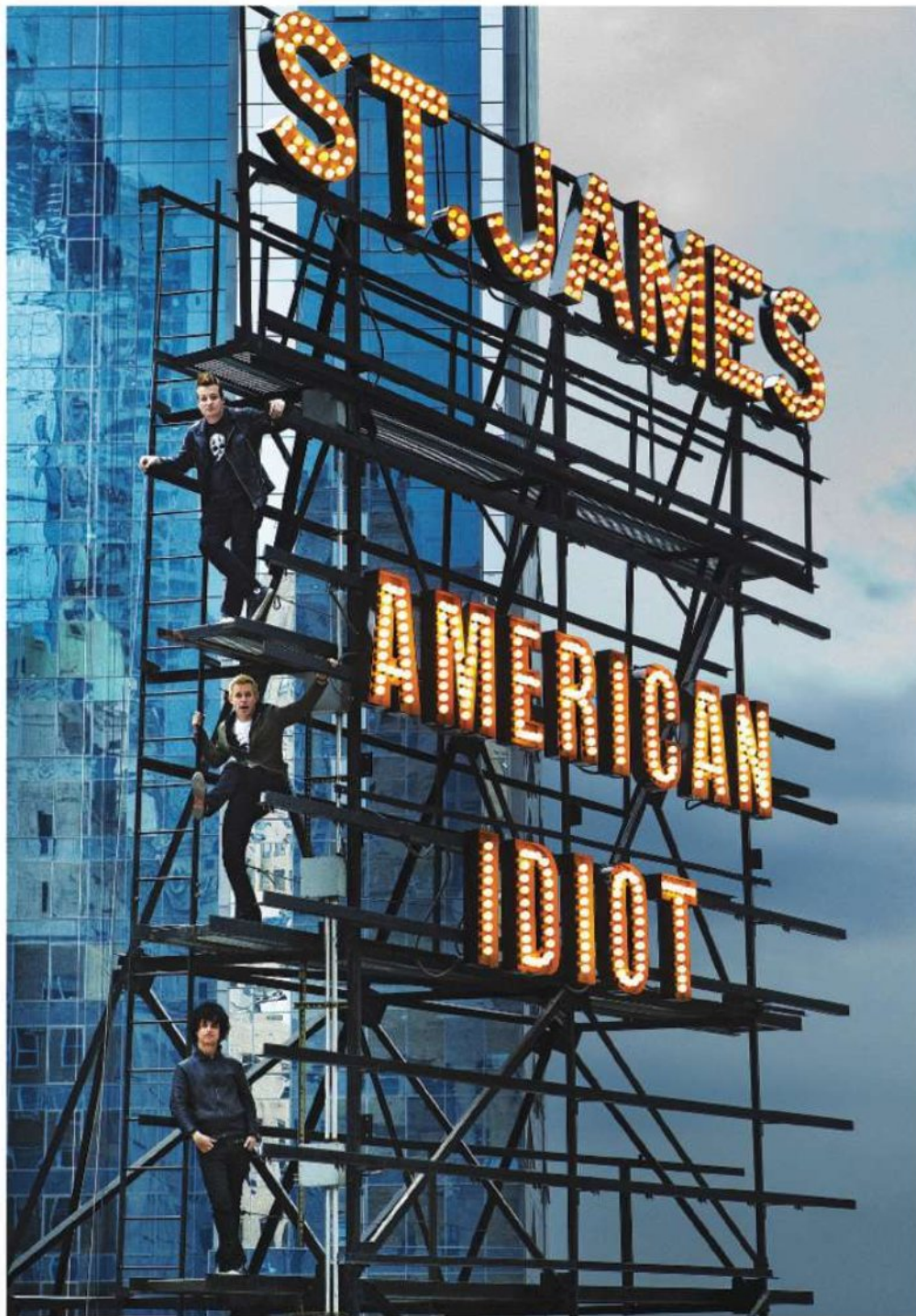
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# RS1104

"All the News That Fits"



## Green Day Take Manhattan

A rave in *The New York Times*; packed previews; more than \$2.3 million in tickets sold: Green Day were the toast of Broadway during the opening of *American Idiot* in April (see page 15). "I feel like we did before we put out *Dookie*," says Tré Cool. But not all of Broadway was ready for punk rock: After the band scampered up the show's marquee (above), an agitated theater worker demanded they climb down *right away*.

Photograph by GAVIN BOND

### COVER STORY

## The Tao of Robert Downey Jr.

Hardass, flake, superstar: The greatest actor of his generation is anything you want him to be – and an Iron Man, too.

By Walter Kirn ..... 42

### FEATURES

## Ke\$ha: Confessions of a Party Animal

Bourbon, blow jobs and the biggest lesbian party on the planet: Up all night with the "TiK ToK" singer – a.k.a. pop's hottest hell-raiser.

By Austin Scaggs ..... 50

## The Boy Who Stole Planes

Colton Harris-Moore was a troubled teen on the run from the law. He had never set foot in a plane. But when he stole his first Cessna, he became an outlaw legend.

By Jason Kersten ..... 56

### NATIONAL AFFAIRS

## Revenge of the Puppet

Hamid Karzai, the president of Afghanistan, is trying to end the war – but will the Obama administration let him?

By Robert Dreyfuss ..... 36

## The Feds vs. Goldman Sachs

The SEC case against Goldman Sachs reveals the bottom-line truth about Wall Street: It's even worse than we thought.

By Matt Taibbi ..... 40

### CLOSE-UP

## Gogol Bordello's Wandering Gypsy

Tracking down Eugene Hütz, king of punk-rock Balkan party music (and Madonna buddy), in his new home: sunny Rio de Janeiro.

By Christian Hoard ..... 54



## ROCK & ROLL

### Green Day Musical Debuts on Broadway

*American Idiot* opens to rave reviews in New York ..... 15

### Coachella 2010

Jay-Z brings out his lady for a surprise start to the desert festival. **PLUS:** Pavement, Muse, Phoenix ..... 15

## BREAKING

### Major Lazer

Diplo and Switch bring the beats and the sleaze to their Caribbean jams ..... 24

## Q&A

### Melissa Etheridge

On ZZ Top and how she's grooming her kids to rock... 28

## TV

### Justified

Why this cop show in a cowboy hat is cable TV's guiltiest pleasure ..... 34

## REVIEWS

### The Hold Steady

Bar-band greats take it to next level. **PLUS:** Dead Weather .... 65

## MOVIES

### 'Iron Man' Returns

Robert Downey Jr. takes on Mickey Rourke. **PLUS:** *A Nightmare on Elm Street* .... 72



### On the Cover

Robert Downey Jr. photographed in Lancaster, California, on March 1st, 2010.

**Photograph by Mark Seliger**

Styling by Annie Psaltiras at the Wall Group. Grooming by Davy Newkirk at Tracey Mattingly. Set design by Chris Gaskill for Art Works Hollywood Inc. Denim shirt by DGrey, T-shirt by Alternative Apparel.

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From Leo DiCaprio's *Inception* to *Eat Pray Love*: the best – and worst – new films

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How to sneak punk rock onto Broadway, with Green Day and the cast of the musical

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: STEPHEN VAUGHAN/WARNER BROS. PICTURES; FOX; JEFF KRAVITZ/FILMMAGIC; KEVIN MAZUR/WIREIMAGE



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# Correspondence

## { Love Letters & Advice }



### 'Glee,' Clubbed

HOLY ERIK HEDEGAARD! You've gone and done it again: another article I just couldn't put down ["Glee Gone Wild," RS 1102]. Totally compassionate, completely honest and all wrapped up in a perfect flow of exposition. Thanks for a great read. The "boy shorts" on the cover plus the "boy shorts" in the interview: priceless.

Rebecca Goodman  
Via the Internet

RS 1, "GLEE" O. HEDEGAARD'S interviews with the *Glee* cast were a victory for everyone who ever suffered the psychic vampirism of the high school thespian crowd. It is funny, if sad, that any of them thought that the same personae they cultivated in school would work in the setting of an RS interview.

Jared Hammad, Sacramento

MARK SELIGER'S PHOTOS OF the cast of *Glee* were truly inspired. But who really cares if Lea Michele pees in the shower? I wish Hedegaard had done a better job of entertaining me.

Laura Morgan, Dallas

IF HEDEGAARD IS GOING TO be a douche, he can't be upset when the cast doesn't want to talk to him in the end.

Mary Maxwell, via the Internet

HEDEGAARD'S PIECE ON THE cast of *Glee* was some of the most self-absorbed, adolescent twaddle I've ever read. His puerile, confrontational questions, snide asides and bored posturing suggest he is either too burned out to do his job, or he sabotaged the piece out of spite.

John Eiler, Sierra Madre, CA

HEDEGAARD DESERVES credit for making it through the treacherous terrain of his *Glee* interviews. The story framed his experiences compellingly and candidly. Not an easy task.

Wes Kennison, via the Internet

### Boy on a Board

THANKS SO MUCH FOR THE moving story about "Aspie" surfer Clay Marzo ["The Surfing Savant," RS 1102]. It's unfortunate that it took so long for doctors to come to the

diagnosis of Asperger's, but with Marzo's fame and notoriety, hopefully he can be an inspiration to others in similar situations.

Heather Schaefer, Raleigh, NC

### Sleazy Street

READING MATT TAIBBI'S "Looting Main Street" [RS 1102] reminds me of the train-wreck parable: You know it's going to be gruesome, but you've got to look. Thanks for another excellently written exposé on another glaring and

important issue that the mainstream media missed.

Mary Jane Blatchford  
Charleston, SC

AT SOME POINT, THE TRANSGRESSIONS of our banking system should receive a new label: criminal. Please keep uncovering the activities of those who are infringing upon our ability to live the American dream.

Michael B. Allison  
Via the Internet

### Soul Siren

JENNY ELISCU'S STORY "The Soul and Science of

Erykah Badu" [RS 1102] was so inspiring. Badu's music is the perfect blend of intelligence, satire and whimsy, without being pretentious.

Beth Callaway, Greenville, SC

### Big Star, RIP

DAVID FRICKE'S PIECE ON Alex Chilton ["A Rock & Roll Life in Reverse," RS 1102] just could not have been any better. After I read everything in print about Alex's life and death over the past weeks, it was really nice to get the insights about his recent years that Fricke obviously took the extra effort to pull together.

Mike Bodayle, Franklin, TN

### Rock's Lensman

THANK YOU, ANTHONY DE-Curtis, for your tribute to "Rock's Greatest Photogra-

**"I could not put down Hedegaard's 'Glee' story. It was compassionate and honest, a perfect flow of exposition."**

pher," Jim Marshall [RS 1102]. Marshall's photos captured the artists in a way few could, and they opened up to him, exposing their vulnerable truths. Rest in peace, Jim, you will be missed.

Joseph Carter, San Francisco

### Lone Wolf

AMERICA'S GREATEST FRONTMAN, Peter Wolf [Rock & Roll, RS 1102], may have less bite and more growl these days, but what remains consistent is his humility. He is incapable of talking about himself without paying tribute to all who came before him and continue to influence his art. Wolf might not have invented the wheel, but he keeps it rolling.

Ross Albert, Calgary, Alberta

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## What They're Saying

The buzz about "Looting Main Street" [RS 1102]

MATT TAIBBI'S LATEST BROADSIDE at the financial industry sparked howls of outrage against Wall Street. *The Washington Examiner* hailed the piece as "one of the best dissections of the way special-interest groups, corrupt local officials and Wall Street bankers collude to bring municipalities to the brink of bankruptcy." Market Watch's Peter Brimelow wondered



"how any economy can survive this sort of predatory parasitism." The financial blog *Business Insider* praised Taibbi's "excellent savaging of JPMorgan." And on his show, Don Imus said he can't wait for Taibbi's forthcoming book on the financial meltdown, because it will contain even more muckraking on the crisis - "plus name-calling."





# AXE twist

THE FRAGRANCE THAT CHANGES



# Editor's Notes

## True Hollywood Stories

**A** LOT OF THE TIME, THE SKILLS that come with being a great novelist don't translate very well to journalism. Just because you can make things up doesn't necessarily mean you report them with the same degree of energy and imagination. Walter Kirn, who wrote this issue's cover story on Robert Downey Jr., is a happy exception to that rule. "Fiction is making a story; journalism is finding one," he says. "That's the big difference. When I am writing a novel, I am usually dealing with events or ideas that have already arranged themselves in memory. With nonfiction, you need to find your perspective before time has arranged it. The trick is to write about something as if you've been thinking about it for 10 years."

In our age of specialization, Kirn, 47, is a throwback to a time when American literary culture was populated by writers at home in many different disciplines. He's written five novels, including *Up in the Air*, the basis for the recent George Clooney movie; a memoir, *Lost in the Meritocracy*, about drugs, sex and snobbery at Princeton University in the Eighties; a book of short stories; and countless book reviews, profiles and essays that have appeared in *Time*, *New York* magazine, *GQ* and *Esquire*. Just a few weeks ago in *The New York Times Book Review*, he disemboweled the latest novel by Ian

McEwan, the British writer who, until he ran into Kirn's well-sharpened blade, was perhaps the best-reviewed novelist working today.

For the past couple of years, Kirn has been making regular trips to Hollywood through the making of *Up in the Air*. What he found there was something he hardly expected. "Hollywood's a lot more like Detroit in the Fifties than you'd think," he says. "It likes to portray itself as the world capital of glamour and decadence, but it's a company town—a highly ordered and highly structured world where people go to bed early, watch their weight obsessively and schedule every

second of their day. They probably have better parties in Iowa City."

And like any big corporate world, he says, it's not the people with the most spark who succeed. "I learned there are two kinds of people in the movie community," Kirn says. "People who want to make things, and people who want to get credit for making things. The disillusioning thing is that it's the people who want the credit who end up winning most of the time."

It's this knowledge of Hollywood that drew Kirn to Downey. "He manages to preserve a spirit of anarchy in that pressurized big-money environment," Kirn says. "That's hard to do."

—WILL DANA, *Managing Editor*



**UP IN THE AIR:** Kirn's novel was the basis for last year's Oscar-nominated movie.

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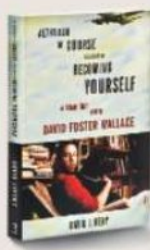
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## 'Rolling Stone' at the Bookstore

Two hot new books were first acclaimed features in *ROLLING STONE*. Contributing editor Jeff Goodell's **How to Cool the Planet: Geoengineering and the Audacious Quest to Fix the Earth's Climate** was based on his 2006 story "Can Dr. Evil Save the World?" about a Pentagon scientist's radical schemes to halt global warming through man-made means. *The Dallas Morning News* praised Goodell's book as "elegantly written and thoughtful." And the *San Francisco Chronicle* hailed it as "entertaining," with "a healthy dose of skepticism."



David Lipsky's **Although of Course You End Up Becoming Yourself: A Road Trip With David Foster Wallace** just hit the *New York Times* best-seller list. ("If you didn't already love Wallace, this book will make you love him," raves *The Christian Science Monitor*.) In 1996,

Lipsky, on assignment for RS, spent five days on the road with the media-shy author, barnstorming through the Midwest. The trip became, more than a decade later, the basis for the book and for Lipsky's 2009 National Magazine Award-winning *ROLLING STONE* profile of the late literary superstar.



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## MICHAEL JACKSON

Cirque du Soleil preps Jackson-themed Vegas show and global tour. **Page 20**

## HOT BAND: MAJOR LAZER

A wild night in Chicago with the rowdy electro-dancehall crew. **Page 24**

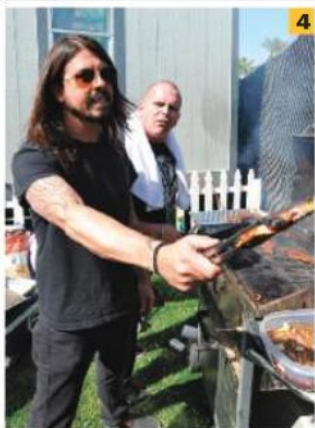
## MELISSA ETHERIDGE

On her Led Zep-inspired new LP and rocking out with her kids. **Page 28**

# Rock & Roll



(1) Beyoncé joined Jay-Z for "Young Forever." (2) Pavement's Stephen Malkmus. (3) Mick Jones and Paul Simonon with Damon Albarn (center) of Gorillaz. (4) Dave Grohl grills backstage.



## Green Day Musical Debuts on Broadway

Behind the curtain as the smash 'American Idiot' show opens

By David Fricke

**I**T'S INSANE!" BILLIE Joe Armstrong exclaims, his eyes wide with wonder. Green Day's singer-guitarist is sitting in the mezzanine of the St. James Theatre in New York with bassist Mike Dirnt and drummer Tré Cool.

### ONSTAGE

Opening night is barely a week away: After a month of previews and standing ovations, *American Idiot*, the musical-theater adaptation of the group's 2004 protest-punk album, makes its Broadway debut here on April 20th. Onstage, director Michael Mayer is coaching two members of the 19-strong cast through last-minute tweaks in gesture and vocal delivery.

"When we first came to the St. James," Armstrong says, "I walked backstage looking for a bathroom. Then I saw this sign." It was a poster for *The Merry Malones*, a musical written by George M. Cohan, which opened on the same stage in 1927. "This is the guy who wrote 'Yankee Doodle Dandy,'" Armstrong says, singing a few bars at

## Coachella Opens Fest Season With Jay-Z, Pavement, Muse

Record crowds flock to desert for reunions, buzz bands and superstar DJs

By Jenny Eliscu

**B**Y THE TIME JAY-Z TOOK the stage on the first night of this year's Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, California, antici-

pation for the rapper's performance was already at a fever pitch. So when the MC—after tearing through monster hits like "Hard Knock Life (Ghetto Anthem)," "99 Problems" and "Empire State of Mind"—brought his wife, Beyoncé, out for a surprise duet on the Alphaville-sampling "Young

Forever" as fireworks exploded in the sky, it felt like the biggest and best Coachella surprise imaginable. "His show is amazing," says Grizzly Bear's Ed Droste. "It's so many words! I mean, we have songs where it's 15 words and that's it."

But it had been a rough first day: With- [Cont. on 18]



Ramones-like speed. "I'm like, 'From "Yankee Doodle Dandy" to *American Idiot* – how the fuck did I get here, man?"

It took nearly two years. Mayer, who won a Tony Award in 2007 for directing the teen-angst musical *Spring Awakening*, presented his first workshop reading of *American Idiot* to Green Day in June 2008. The band members figure they have already seen the show 15 times – in rehearsals, at a sold-out run last fall in Berkeley and in New York previews. "It's like putting your kid up for adoption," Dirnt says, "and coming back and going, 'Wow, you've really grown.'"

"It's still evolving," Armstrong points out. He cites "She's a Rebel," one of nearly 30 musical sequences in the one-act, 95-minute production. "At first, it was this cool club scene. Then all of a sudden, everyone was in their underwear. That wasn't connecting," he says, laughing, "so they brought it back."

But Mayer and his creative team, including choreographer Steven Hoggett and music supervisor Tom Kitt (who won a Pulitzer for composing the Broadway hit *Next to Normal*), got the record's brick-muscle assault and Armstrong's narrative to the stage intact. Loud, fast and sugar-free, *American Idiot* – the odyssey of an adolescent screw-up, the Jesus of Suburbia, through sex, drugs, despair and occasional joy in the first dark years of the second Bush presidency – is the most authentic and modern rock & roll rush on Broadway. The first 20 minutes – the title track, the mini-opera "Jesus of Suburbia" and the caustic escape song "Holiday" – are a whirl of unison moshing and hell-yeah vocal ardor by a young cast that looks and acts like it jumped out of the pit at a Green Day gig.

Hoggett admits he got a lot of inspiration from kids on the floor at a Green Day show he saw last summer: "I didn't watch the band. I watched everyone else."



**BROADWAY GOES GREEN** The *American Idiot* cast on opening night during the curtain call (top); Armstrong and director Mayer.



"You don't get let off the hook for a second," says John Gallagher Jr., who plays Jesus of Suburbia, renamed Johnny for the show, and who won a Tony for *Spring Awakening*. Gallagher is also an ardent Green Day fan. He recalls that on the 2005 live

**"This is the first musical with up-to-the-moment hits," says director Mayer.**

DVD, *Bullet in a Bible*, "Mike [Dirnt] described their live show as a moving train. I never fully understood that until I started performing *American Idiot*."

"This is unprecedented," Mayer says one day over dinner. "*Spring Awakening* was the first time there was original contemporary rock connected to a narrative in a Broadway show." Musicals such as *Hair*, *Rent* and the Broadway version of the Who's *Tommy* were "rockish" or based on classic

rock. *American Idiot* "is the first musical with songs that are up-to-the-moment hits on radio." That includes five numbers Mayer added from Green Day's current record, *21st Century Breakdown*.


He's taken other liberties – adding characters (the anguished stoner Will, the maimed Iraq War veteran Tunny) and a few more expletives; expanding the role of the girlfriend Whatsername; and setting "Last Night on Earth" to a rapturous heroin-shooting ballet involving a rubber tourniquet. At one New York preview, a couple walked out during that scene. At another show, Cool sat next to a woman who, he says, "started crying. It was obvious she'd had a drug problem in the past."

Contractually, Mayer was free to make changes, and Armstrong insists he had only one concern: "I didn't want it *not* to rock." At some rehearsals, he, Dirnt and Cool sat in with the stage band, jamming and giving pointers. Green Day, in turn, heard some new things in their music, like the key modulations Kitt added to songs to accommodate female voices. "'21 Guns' was tricky – it goes in and out of those ranges," Kitt says. "One of the cool things Billie said was, 'You can't tell. It sounds cohesive.'"

Green Day were so impressed with Kitt they hired him to do string arrangements for *21st Century Breakdown*.

On a mirror in his basement dressing room, Gallagher has written, in large letters with a blue marker, "Don't Forget the Love." It is, he says, a reminder: "'Jesus of Suburbia' starts with 'I'm the son of rage and love.' For a while, in previews, I was just the son of rage. But there is the wounded side of him. That part of the story between Johnny and Whatsername isn't just lust. It's this real thing he loses for himself."

Armstrong defends unanswered questions at the end of the record and the show. "You're a moron sometimes," he says. "It can't be Christmas and Easter Bunnies every day." He also declares that for Green Day's next album, "we'll definitely end up doing something like a rock opera again. We're too good at it." And they are especially fond of one new song, written for their garage-rock alter ego, Foxboro Hot Tubs, in tribute to the *American Idiot* cast. Before curtain time, Armstrong says, the singers and dancers gather in a huddle, hands on hands, and shout, "It's fuck time!"

"So we wrote a song for them, 'It's Fuck Time.'" He grins. "We haven't told them yet." 



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1



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2



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### Three Days in the Desert

(1) LCD Soundsystem's James Murphy. (2) Matt Bellamy from Muse, who covered Nirvana and Hendrix. (3) Pink biking backstage. (4) Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros' frontman Alex Ebert. (5) Jack White and Alison Mosshart of the Dead Weather.

## COACHELLA

[Cont. from 15] in hours of opening its gates, the festival had earned an unfortunate nickname, with a corresponding Twitter hashtag: #clusterfuckchella. Bumper-to-bumper traffic, parking delays, massive lines and general overcrowding inside had ticket holders complaining that, for \$269 a pop, Coachella was too much of a hassle. (Festival producer Goldenvoice was unavailable for comment.)

But each day fans turned out in record numbers to see stellar performances by cutting-edge artists, old and new, from Pavement and Muse to LCD Soundsystem and MGMT. "To me, the fact that there's green grass in the middle of the desert is already crazy," says Phoenix guitarist Laurent Brancowitz. "But the fact that there's a festival held on it is beyond imagination. It's human craziness at its extreme. We really love it."

No one seemed to enjoy Coachella quite as much as the festival's de facto king and queen, Jay-Z and Beyoncé. The pair shuttled between Coachella's five stages in a trio of black SUVs and were spotted standing sidestage for Phoenix, MGMT, Yeasayer, Dirty Projectors, the xx,



4

Thom Yorke, Beach House and others.

With crystal chandeliers hanging above them, Vampire Weekend inspired singalongs on tunes like the herky-jerky "M79." It was the band's second time performing at Coachella, but its first time playing the fest at night. "We made it behind the dark curtain," singer Ezra Koenig said backstage. "That's what they call it in the industry when you finally get to play after the sun goes down. OK, no, I just made that up."

As usual, the fest was an indie nerd's delight, culminating in a flawless, unforgetta-

ble Sunday-night performance by Pavement, playing their second American date in a decade and sounding bigger, tighter and more confident than ever. The set included fan faves "Cut Your Hair," "Shady Lane" and "Summer Babe (Winter Version)," but Pavement were most impressive when letting loose on extended jams like "Fight This Generation," one of the most bootleg-worthy moments of the weekend.

For fans of electronic music, there were even more marquee-level offerings than ever before — from Dutch trance DJ Tiësto's Saturday night main-stage

closing slot to dance-tent sets from Orbital and 2manydjs. But the weirdest story of the weekend was the packed tent that greeted South African Internet sensation Die Antwoord. The hip-hop trio were added to the lineup at the last minute, wedged into a 20-minute slot just before midnight. Girls singer Christopher Owens lingered outside their trailer, hoping to get an autograph. The next day, Owens proudly wore the baseball cap signed by the group's Ninja and Yo-Landi Vi\$\$er. "I had to wait around a long time," he said, smiling broadly. "But it was worth it."





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# Michael Jackson, Cirque du Soleil Team Up for Tour, Vegas Show

The crew behind Beatles and Elvis spectaculars tackles the King of Pop  
By Steve Knopper

**W**HEN MICHAEL Jackson visited Cirque du Soleil's Montreal studios in 2004, the King of Pop and the troupe's president, Daniel Lamarre, discussed collaborating on an elaborate stage production. Now, 10 months after Jackson's death, those plans are coming to fruition – with two shows based on Jackson's music: a 2011 arena tour, which will simulate a Jackson concert, and a 2012 production in Las Vegas, where Cirque also has shows based on the music of the Beatles and Elvis. "When I met Michael, he said, half-joking, 'I'm an acrobat myself,'" says Lamarre. "The common ground is the visual. He used to do the most extravagant shows, and that's what we do too."

Cirque du Soleil, which spent nine months negotiating with Jackson's estate, will have access to his catalog, including new remixes and unreleased tracks. The tour will begin in



**RINGMASTER**  
Two new Cirque du Soleil productions will feature Jackson's music.



North America, then branch out to places like China, Japan and Europe; the Vegas show, in a theater yet to be determined, will use technology in cutting-edge ways, perhaps even creating a hologram of Jackson performing. "We're thinking 3-D, the use of holograms, motion simulation," says John Branca, co-executor of Jackson's estate. "[Cirque] were completely into that."

Jackson's estate is also planning to launch a reality-TV search for a choreographer; talks with networks are taking

place now. Sony Music, which paid \$250 million for the rights to Jackson's catalog in March, plans to release a soundtrack album coinciding with the Cirque shows, sources say.

So after their 2004 meeting, why didn't Jackson and Cirque collaborate during his life? "This guy had a lot of different projects going on at the same time, and we had many different projects going on at the same time, and we never really found the appropriate moment to make it happen," Lamarre says. "But we were bound to work together." **RS**



Cornell in Seattle at Soundgarden's first gig since 1997

## Soundgarden Return With Surprise Gig

At their first concert since breaking up 13 years ago, Soundgarden ran through an 18-song set at the Seattle club Showbox on April 16th. (They were billed as Nudedragons on the marquee.) The 75-minute show was heavy on early material – including their first single, 1987's "Hunted Down" – and it skipped the quartet's biggest hit, 1994's "Black Hole Sun." "It's not just songs that we stopped playing in 1997," Chris Cornell said to the crowd, which included Pearl Jam's Eddie Vedder and Stone Gossard. "It's songs we stopped playing in 1990." So far, the band has only one other gig announced – an August 8th headlining slot at Lollapalooza.

CHARLES R. CROSS

# HOT LIST



## LCD SOUNDSYSTEM

### "Drunk Girls" video

James Murphy and director Spike Jonze could've made an indie-girls-gone-wild clip for this ironic party anthem – but instead they hired maniacs in panda suits. Drunk girls, drunk pandas – at last call, it's all the same.

## BLUR

### "Fool's Day"

Turns out Blur had a plan for victory against Oasis: Break up, wait for the Gallagher brothers to go away, then unleash an ultra-British, ultrapretty, Ray Davies-goes-dub comeback single. It's the world's most precious sneak attack.

## BAND OF HORSES

### "Laredo"

BoH shake off their rootsy haze and get power-poppy, complete with chiming, Big Star-y guitars and reverb-free vocals. These dudes may still have beards, but this tune is cleanshaven.

## TANYA MORGAN

### "Bang & Boogie" video

Oddly, Tanya Morgan is not a lady. It's three De La Soul-ish male MCs who deliver the most roller-skate-ready hip-hop jam we've heard in years.

## SLASH

### "Nothing to Say"

You know how that Avenged Sevenfold guy sounds just like Axl? Slash noticed too, and got him to wail over the most *Use Your Illusion*-esque track on his solo album. Way to use your hat!



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# Dixie Chicks Duo Unleash the Hounds

Emily Robison, Martie Maguire form new band, prep for Chicks tour

By Melissa Maerz

COUNTRY FANS KNOW Emily Robison and Martie Maguire as “the quiet one” and “the smiley one” from the Dixie Chicks. The sisters always took a back seat to outspoken frontwoman Natalie Maines – who famously confessed on the eve of the Iraq War that she was “ashamed the

## PROFILE

president of the United States is from Texas.” With their new folk-rock project, Court Yard Hounds, the sidewomen are stepping into the spotlight. “Emily’s always been happy to be in the background,” says Maguire, 40. “But her singing and songwriting are bold.” She turns toward her younger sister: “I didn’t know you had that side of you!”

Recorded mostly in their hometown of Austin, *Court Yard Hounds* has a rootsy, introspective sound reminiscent of alt-country acts like the Jayhawks and Lucinda Williams. “The early Dixie Chicks albums have a gee-wow country thing,” says Jim Scott, who co-produced *Court Yard Hounds* and has also worked with the Chicks, Wilco and Tom Petty. “But this is not a cutesy record. There’s a lot of serious songwriting and emotional vulnerability.”

Robison wrote most of the material in the wake of her



**READY TO MAKE NICE** Emily Robison (left) and Martie Maguire formed Court Yard Hounds while the Dixie Chicks were on hiatus.

divorce from singer-songwriter Charlie Robison, including “It Didn’t Make a Sound,” which hints at one reason why marriages don’t work out: Sometimes people cheat. “I’ve gotten to an age,” Robison, 37, says, “where I just don’t care about what people think.”

Other cuts are more political, like “Ain’t No Son,” a surging, fiddle-fueled cut about a gay son coming out to his conservative father. “Having kids myself, I can’t imagine them doing anything that would make me not love them,” she says. Maguire adds, “Moms with serial-killer sons still love them!”

The tunes were originally meant for the Dixie Chicks – who haven’t released a record since 2006’s *Taking the Long Way* – but Maines wasn’t quite ready to go back to work. “She was under the microscope [after the Bush comment], and it wasn’t a fun place to be,” Maguire explains. “We all felt the same way [about Bush], but Natalie got all the criticism because she’s a big personality.”

After the Court Yard Hounds album was finished, Maines decided to come out of her semi-retirement for an opening slot on the Eagles’ stadium tour this summer. “You don’t turn that down,” Maguire says. The

Court Yard Hounds will work in their own shows around the Chicks’ schedule. “We’re trying to play festivals so that there isn’t the pressure of selling tickets,” says Maguire. “When we get enough music out there, we’ll do our own tour.”

The Hounds are realistic about the commercial potential of the project – especially compared to the multiplatinum Dixie Chicks. “From the start, our manager has been like, ‘You know you’re going back to these sweaty clubs with no AC? Are you sure you’re ready for this?’” says Maguire. “But we honed our skills in those clubs. We’re prepared.”

## Guru, Pioneering New York Rapper, Dies at 48

By Evan Serpick

EAST COAST HIP-HOP pioneer Guru, leader of gritty duo Gang Starr and rap-jazz fusion project Jazzmatazz, died on April 19th

## TRIBUTE

in New York after a yearlong struggle with cancer. He was 48. “He had one of the most dis-

tinctive voices in music,” says A Tribe Called Quest’s Q-Tip. “If you wanted to understand rapping, if you want to get thugged-out, if you want to get political, you could listen to Gang Starr – they encompassed everything.”

With his gruff monotone and stark, no-nonsense lyrics, Guru and his partner, DJ Premier, defined a stripped-down strain of Nineties New York hip-hop. Guru – born Keith Elam – actu-



Guru in 1993

ally grew up in Boston, the son of a judge and a public-school library administrator. He graduated from Morehouse Col-

lege, worked as a social worker and attended the Fashion Institute of Technology before he dropped out in the mid-Eighties to pursue a music career.

Over a 14-year span, Gang Starr released six LPs, and scored two gold albums and several Top 10 rap singles, including “Mass Appeal” and “Take It Personal.” With Jazzmatazz, the rapper collaborated with jazz greats like Herbie Hancock and Branford Marsalis. “Guru was at the vanguard of rap,” says Nas. “He was never negative – he was just saying what was going on in the streets.”



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# Major Lazer's Nonstop Reggae Party

Electro-dancehall duo blow up with raucous, raunchy live show

By Josh Eells

IT'S A SUNNY AFTERNOON in Chicago, and Diplo is on a mission for some pants. The more famous half of hipster dancehall duo Major Lazer has been trouserless for a week, since a raucous show in Philadelphia left him with a gaping hole in his favorite pair of slacks. "I ripped 'em right there," he says, pointing crotchward. "Too much dancing!"

Such are the hazards of a Major Lazer show. Diplo and his partner, English producer Dave "Switch" Taylor, released their first LP last year to modest acclaim. But they've since built a rep as one of the rowdiest live acts around, packing thousand-seat-plus venues with sold-out crowds of sweaty girls and the raunchiest dancing this side of Montego Bay.

First, though, there's business to be done. From the moment the tour bus rolls into Chicago, Diplo—who is also an in-demand DJ, co-owns a label (Mad Decent) and has produced tracks for M.I.A. and Snoop Dogg—never stops working. After a DJ set at a local record store, Diplo hits the gym with his booking agent, planning his next tour between sets on the elliptical. On the taxi ride back to the venue, he sketches out ideas for a Major Lazer cartoon, then tweaks some tracks for M.I.A.'s new album back on his bus.

"I've been into Jamaican music forever," he says, between bites of a hot dog. As a teenager in Florida, Diplo would listen to reggae on the radio and watch *Caribbean Rhythms* on BET; his first-ever release was a collaboration with the dancehall artist Vybz Kartel (2004's "Diplo Rhythm"). But the seeds of Major Lazer were really sown in 2006, when he was booked to DJ on the Jam Cruise—seven days on a boat



## Windy City Mayhem

A Major Lazer show is a wild night. In Chicago, Diplo (1) works the turntables while dancer Mimi hypes the crowd. Skerrit Bwoy crowd-surfs (2) and, in Philly, shows off the sleazy Jamaican dance called "dagging" (3).

with bands like Critters Buggin and Umphrey's McGee. "A fucking hippie cruise," he says. "We got to the first stop"—Ocho Rios, Jamaica—"and I was like, 'Yo, I'm out!'" Lured by visions of white-sand beaches, he traversed the country, recording the demos that would later become Major Lazer's first songs. The next year, he was hanging with Switch in London, co-producing M.I.A.'s second LP, and recruited him to collaborate. After a second trip to

Jamaica, they had their debut, a noisy reggae-punk-electro hybrid called *Guns Don't Kill People... Lazers Do*.

Switch got sick last week and went home to L.A. to work on the group's second LP, due this fall. They've been recording at Bob Marley's Tuff Gong Studios in Kingston, with guests ranging from Lykke Li to Beenie Man. (They're also talking to Gwen Stefani.) "In Jamaica, music is a huge part of everyday life," Switch says later. "It's street culture, it's politics, it's sex—it's everything."

Tonight, it's mainly sex. Onstage, Skerrit Bwoy, the mohawked Antiguan who acts as the group's frontman, tears off his shirt and invites girls onstage to participate in the horn-dog Jamaican dance called "dagging." (Picture a Labrador dry-humping a sofa.)

At the gig's frenetic peak, he jumps off a 15-foot ladder, lands between the legs of Mimi (one of the group's dancers) and then grinds her enthusiastically. "We're not trying to be authentically Jamaican," Diplo explains. "We're trying to be as loud and obnoxious as possible."

After the show, everyone piles into a backstage lounge. Beers are cracked open; smoke fills the air. Diplo is installed in a corner, talking to a few West Indian-looking beauties. But it's Skerrit Bwoy who scores the evening's biggest coup, heading off to the bus with a quart of milk in one arm, some granola in the other and three bikini-clad girls trailing behind. "I got milk, I got cereal, and I got bitches," he announces on his way out. "It's an awesome night."





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# Catering to the Hardcore Fans, Independent Retailers Thrive

Sales up 10 percent at indies, thanks to vinyl boom, in-store gigs

By David Browne

ON A RECENT SATURDAY afternoon in Los Angeles, Billy Corgan led the Smashing Pumpkins through a 75-minute set of Nineties hits and new material for 250

## INDUSTRY

Amoeba Music customers who'd pre-ordered the band's upcoming EP. It was just one of nearly 1,000 events nationwide for the third annual Record Store Day, which celebrates the country's independent music retailers. "There's a vitality in indie record stores that's critical," says Corgan. "There's a human aspect to them – in discovering music and talking about it – that you can't get online."

This year's edition of Record Store Day was the largest yet – in cities across America, shops hosted live performances, signings and giveaways, and sold special limited-edition releases. Labels shipped \$1.3 million worth of Record Store Day product in 2010, most of it limited-edition vinyl, like a live Bruce Springsteen seven-inch, R.E.M.'s out-of-print 1982 debut EP and two unreleased Beastie Boys remixes.

Music retailers have had a tough decade – more than 3,000 U.S. record stores have closed since 2005. For independent retailers, the worst appears to be over: In the first quarter of this year, as music sales at chains like F.Y.E. and Barnes & Noble declined by 33 percent, SoundScan reports that sales at indie stores have risen 10 percent. Many in the industry think the collapse of the big chains – Tower, Virgin Megastore, HMV – has pushed hardcore fans back to independents. "Indies are run by music people consuming music all the time," says Rusty Clarke, head of sales at Beggars Group



### High Fidelity Lives

Record Store Day brought out rock stars, like Slash (1), signing CDs at L.A.'s Amoeba Music, and limited-edition vinyl releases, including a new Of Montreal single (2), an unreleased 1972 cut from the Rolling Stones (3) and two songs (4) from the Black Keys' next album.

USA. "They're more in tune with what's going on. And your average indie release won't always be in Best Buy or Target."

Also helping the local stores survive is the revival of vinyl and a new major-label initiative to slash prices on back cat-

**"There's a vitality in indie stores that is critical," says Billy Corgan.**

alog to as low as \$6. "If there were ever a time to drop the list price, it was now," says Marc Weinstein of Amoeba. "They should've done it decades ago."

Organized by three coalitions of retailers, Record Store Day was conceived, according to co-founder Michael Kurtz, when the larger music chains began folding. "Just because the biggest stores were going out of business doesn't mean all of us were," he says. "We had to get

our message out and say, 'Wait – we're having a great time!'" Artists have been supportive of Record Store Day from the beginning; this year Frank Black played a set at CD World in Eugene, Oregon; Slash signed CDs at Hollywood's Amoeba; and punk rockers Against Me! performed an unplugged set at Plan 9 Music in Richmond, Virginia. "It was amazing how many people were there at noon," says the band's singer, Tom Gabel. "And it seemed like everybody who walked out of the store bought something."

Ironically, some retailers think we're five years away from a CD boom, as demand for out-of-print discs spikes. "Maybe there'll be CD Store Days 20 years down," says Devo's Jerry Casale. "People will be selling vintage CD players: 'Remember the CD?' I can see it."

Additional reporting by  
PATRICK DOYLE and  
MIKAEL WOOD

## IN THE STUDIO

### Phil Collins Goes Motown

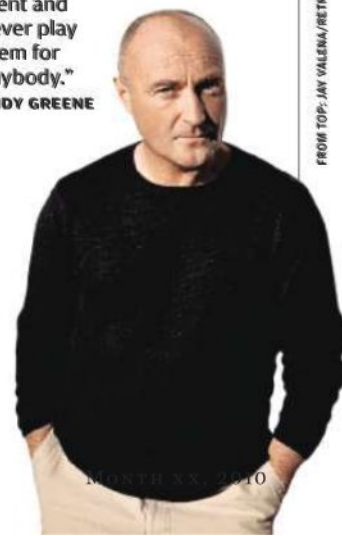
Album Going Back  
Due Out Sept. 28th

The idea for Phil Collins' new collection of Motown covers – his first LP in eight years – goes back four decades. "I used to go to the Marquee Club a few times a week and see mod bands like the Who," he says. "They played a ton of Motown and Stax songs, and I used to go home and check out the originals." With help from the Funk Brothers – he flew three members of the original Motown band to his home studio in Switzerland – Collins has re-created the sound and arrangements of Sixties Detroit soul with incredible precision. "I'm calling it *Going Back* because it's a journey back through the songs that made me want to be a musician," he says.

Collins originally planned to record exclusively lesser-known Motown songs like "In My Lonely Room" and "Loving You Is Sweeter Than Ever," but his longtime friend Clive Davis persuaded him to include hits like "Heat Wave" and "Dancing in the Streets."

Collins plays all the drums himself, though it was an enormous challenge because of recent neck surgery and nerve damage he sustained after years of performing. Now Collins can barely grip anything with his left hand. "We had to attach the drum stick to my hand with gaffer tape and a wristband," he says. "I kept hoping I wasn't going to poke my eye out when I went to adjust my hat." Collins also says the record could be his last: "All my life, I've put out music and people have criticized it. Why keep doing that? I don't need the money. In the future I think I'll write songs in my basement and never play them for anybody."

ANDY GREENE



FROM TOP: JAY VALENTA/RETNA; NORMAN WATSON



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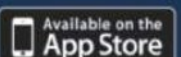
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# Melissa Etheridge Rocks Harder Than Ever on Zep-Inspired Disc

The singer on Sixties rock heroes, her first gig ever and digging Taylor Swift

By Austin Scaggs

**M**ELISSA ETHERIDGE'S 10th studio album, *Fearless Love*, is a mix of the deeply personal (the cancer diary "Drag Me Away") and the intensely political ("Miss California" expresses her anger at California's ban on gay mar-

## Q&A

riage). For the singer, who recently split with wife Tammy Lynn Michaels, it's also her most classic-rock-indebted record yet, with guitar riffs that recall ZZ Top, Led Zeppelin and the Who. "When you hear Muddy Waters, you realize that's where Zeppelin came from," says Etheridge. "That's what rock & roll is: taking your influences and saying, 'This is how I interpret that feeling.'"

*"Fearless Love" is your hardest-rocking album yet. Was that your intention?*

Absolutely, I wanted it to be like that big-old-headphones type of rock & roll. John Shanks, who produced the record, was my first guitar player, and we used to talk about our love of *Houses of the Holy*, the Who and Pink Floyd. I wanted to incorporate that drama, that feeling of taking it to the edge.

*Is there a specific room where you write?*

Before I was a family gal, I'd write anywhere. Now it's like, "OK, Mom's going into her office."

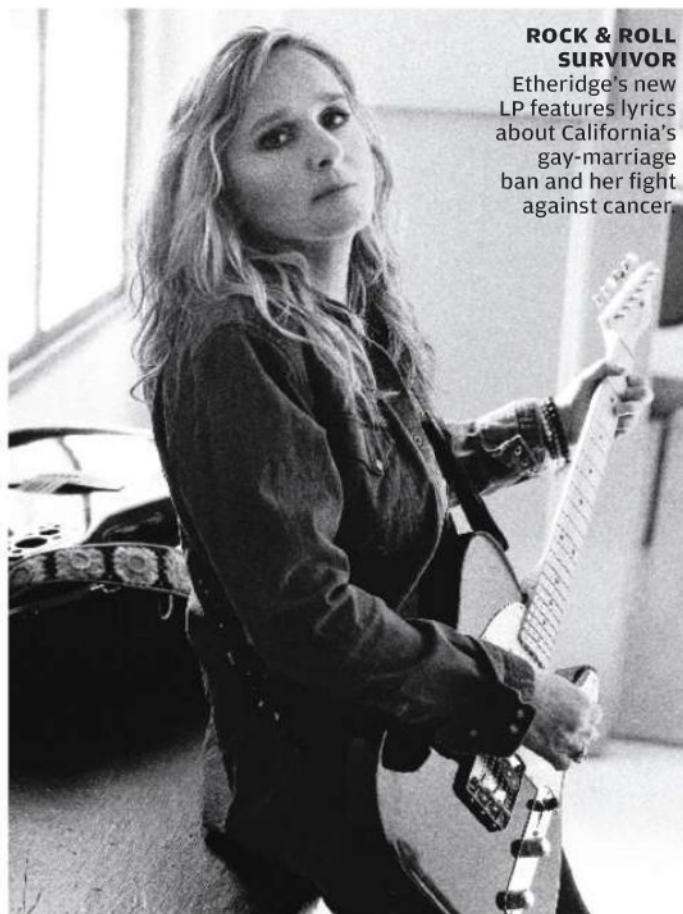
*What's in there?*

My Oscar and my Grammys, a photo of me and Al Gore, and the runner-up trophy from the Leavenworth Plaza talent contest, my first performance.

*What did you sing?*

An original tune of mine called "Lonely Is a Child," which was an anti-war song about a child who'd lost her family. It was a horribly sad and depressing tune. I didn't win.

*Do you still like discovering new music?*



## ROCK & ROLL SURVIVOR

Etheridge's new LP features lyrics about California's gay-marriage ban and her fight against cancer.

## "I wanted the disc to be like that big-old-headphones type of rock & roll."

Yes, I love the Kings of Leon, Cory Chisel's "Born Again" and that One Eskimo song "Kandi." That makes me nuts.

*What about Taylor Swift? Are you a fan?*

I listen to her as a mother, and in that way I really appreciate her music. I was scared about my kids listening to the radio, but thankfully Taylor Swift is one of the artists that my daughter hung on to. She's real, and she's singing about real experiences of teenagers, and for that I'm grateful.

*Is there one album you've listened to more than any other?*

*Born to Run*. No doubt. Bruce has always been so nice to me, which is crazy, because he's one of my heroes. I'll never forget being at a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame ceremony the year Bruce and Paul McCart-

ney were inducted. We were at the bar, and Bruce was talking to Paul, and he turned to me and said, "I can't believe I'm talking to Paul McCartney!" I thought, "I can't believe I'm talking to Bruce Springsteen, who's talking to Paul McCartney!"

*David Crosby is the father of two of your kids, so are they good at harmonizing?*

He's a big part of their lives, and they appreciate his musical talent. My eldest son, Beckett, is very good at guitar, my daughter plays piano, and my youngest son plays drums. If I can get my little daughter to play bass, then we've got a whole band.

*So you're the cool mom who will house a drum kit?*

I'm so cool that the kids come to my bedroom and go, "Mom! Turn the music down!"

## IN THE NEWS

### McCartney Cuts Ties With EMI

**Paul McCartney**, who has recorded for major record label EMI since the Beatles first signed to its Parlophone imprint in 1962, has pulled his post-Beatles solo albums from the company's catalog. He signed a new distribution deal with the independent Concord Music Group, which will begin to reissue his solo albums with enhanced packaging and bonus material beginning in August with Wings' 1973 release, *Band on the Run*. "EMI is a massive company with a massive catalog, and the Beatles solo albums never got the attention that the band got," says Gene Rumsey, chief label officer at Concord and a former executive at EMI. "This is a huge, huge, huge priority for us." McCartney's exit is the latest setback for EMI, which has lost Radiohead and the Rolling Stones in recent years and plans to raise \$550 million to avoid defaulting on a nearly \$5 billion loan from Citigroup bank. EMI declined to comment.

## IN BRIEF

■ **Eminem** will release his seventh album, *Recovery*, on June 22nd. The disc features the rapper working with a new group of collaborators, including **Just Blaze**, **Jim Jonsin** and **Boi-1da**. The MC's last record, 2009's *Relapse*, has sold 1.9 million copies.



■ **Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band** are releasing a live DVD on June 22nd. *London Calling: Live in Hyde Park*, was taped last June and features 26 songs, including covers of Jimmy Cliff's "Trapped" and the Clash's "London Calling."

■ **Mick Jagger** is hosting a benefit auction on May 6th in New York for victims who lost limbs in the Haiti earthquake. Items on the block include autographed guitars from the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Bruce Springsteen, Taylor Swift and Bono (for online bidding information, go to [nydfoundation.com](http://nydfoundation.com)).



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The sign on the dock said "No Running", but it didn't say anything about prize-winning cannonballs. If this were the summer Olympics, I would have won the gold medal. When our fingers Officially turned into prunes, we got out of the water and headed back up to the house. With flip-flops in tow, we ended our perfect day the perfect way.



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JUNE 3 • LAS VEGAS, NV • HARD ROCK AT THE JOINT

JUNE 4 • ANAHEIM, CA • HONDA CENTER  
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"Bob Dylan is a plagiarist. His name and voice are fake." —Joni Mitchell

# Random Notes



## Mother Shakira

Pain relievers Sean Penn and Shakira toured Port-au-Prince's Pétionville golf club, now a makeshift camp housing 50,000 quake survivors. The Colombian pop queen is planning to build a school in Haiti. *Formidable!*



**COCO LOCO**  
Flame-haired funny boy Conan O'Brien donned a paisley purple leather ensemble - à la Raw-era Eddie Murphy - on the opening night of his comedy tour in Oregon.



Dora, Adele and Ida (from left) with Springsteen on Ellis Island

## Bruce's Promised Land

Screw those mainstream showbiz awards! Bruce Springsteen snagged an Ellis Island Family Heritage Award, a prize bestowed on badass immigrants and their descendants. (Bruce's great-grandmother, Raffaella "Born to Sail" Zerilli, arrived at Ellis Island in 1900.) The singer was joined by mother Adele and aunts Ida Urbellis and Dora Kirby - who, at 90, still works as an accountant. "She can do your taxes next season," Bruce cracked.



**WEDDING CRASHER**  
Moments after getting hitched, an Australian couple ran smack into her royal Gaga-ness.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ALLISON SHELLEY/POLARIS; BREEDEN JONES/PACIFIC COAST NEWS; XPOSUREPHOTOS.COM; JASON DECROW/AP IMAGES





Boom Boom Balk!  
Will throws a wild one at  
Dodger Stadium; Jay-Z cheered  
on the Yankees (inset).



Riri cheered  
on her  
personal  
bat boy,  
Matt Kemp.



Death Cab  
frontman  
Ben Gibbard  
in Seattle



A hatless  
Slash was  
three for  
four, with  
two RBIs and  
12 cigarettes  
in L.A.

## Ballpark Hot Dogs

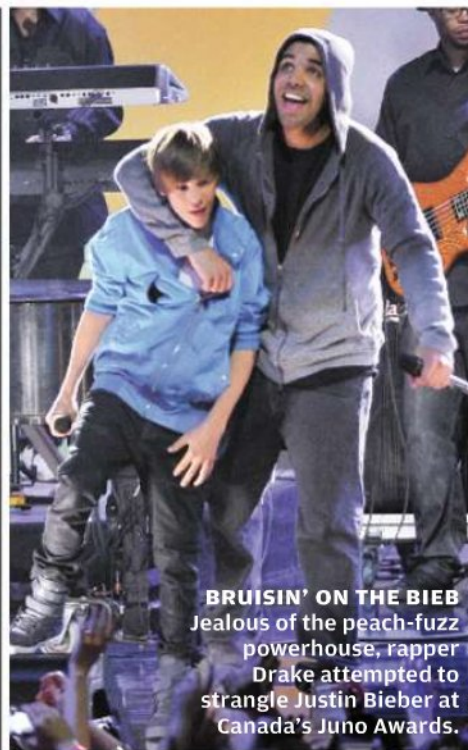
Some musicians belong in stadiums. Like Slash, who delivered a bluesy "God Bless America" in L.A., or Rihanna, who's knockin' boots with a Dodger. Some pop stars, though, should be sent back to the minors, like Will.i.am, whose Opening Day first pitch landed in the dirt; and Death Cab for Cutie's Chris Walla, who bobbled the signature riff on John Fogerty's ballpark jam, "Centerfield." Bush league!



McLaren's  
coffin and  
carriage  
(right) in  
London

## Pistol at Peace

Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren's funeral brought out old punks (like Adam Ant and former Pistol Glen Matlock) to the streets of North London. His coffin was emblazoned with his favorite slogan, Sid Vicious' "My Way" was blasted and anarchy once again reigned in the U.K.



**BRUIISIN' ON THE BIEB**  
Jealous of the peach-fuzz  
powerhouse, rapper  
Drake attempted to  
strangle Justin Bieber at  
Canada's Juno Awards.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LONDON ENT/SPASH NEWS; JACK SHEA/MEET THE FAMOUS; LONDON ENT/SPASH NEWS; 2: ANTHONY BOLANTE/REUTERS; GEORGE PIMENTEL/WIREIMAGE; IAN ALLIS/CAPITAL PICTURES/ADMEDIA; CHRIS JACKSON/GETTY IMAGES



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# The Cowboy Way

Wearing a giant hat and with his hand on his gun, Timothy Olyphant makes 'Justified' TV's guiltiest pleasure **By Rob Sheffield**

**J**USTIFIED" IS THE KIND of laid-back cop show you thought they didn't make anymore – a throwback to the days when TV cops just wanted to shoot up a few cars in between boozy wisecracks. Based on Elmore Leonard short stories, *Justified* doesn't have much on its mind beyond "Yeah, we got some cars and some guns. Let's go blow some shit up. Whatcha drinking, buddy?" No wonder it's a hit – it gave FX its second-biggest premiere ever.

Timothy Olyphant is the cowboy lawman U.S. Marshal Raylan Givens. He used to be stationed in Miami, where he

## Justified

Tuesdays, 10 p.m., FX

got in trouble for shooting a desperado after giving him 24 hours to get out of town. When Givens' supervisor fumes, "You do know we're not allowed to shoot people on sight anymore, right?" Raylan gets transferred to his hometown in rural Harlan County, Kentucky. There he can fight crime his own way, which is to wear a giant stetson, challenge bad guys to

draw, charm the local ladies and waste perps like it was *High Noon*. "If I were you, I'd give up this Nazi bullshit and go back to poachin' gators; it's safer," he explains to a criminal, before slamming his face into a steering wheel.

There aren't any moral hassles here – you can tell the good guy because he's wearing a cowboy hat, and you can tell the bad guys because they have swastika tattoos. And the bad guys really exist only because Raylan needs people to shoot. When one of the interchangeable white-supremacist thugs says, "Who are you – the undertaker?" Raylan responds, "I might be undertakin' a situation right here," which could have been taken verbatim from a Leonard story but sounds more like *CSI: Jersey Shore*.

Harlan County sure looks like a fun place: Every male is either a cop or a convict, while the females are steamy rifle-toting sluts who like to open a phone conversation with the question "Can you smell the chicken frying?" In reality, the place is famous for a bloody 1970s coal strike, but here it's more like Hazzard County. Everybody's incredibly well-

mannered: Even though Raylan has come home from the big city, nobody mocks him for his GTL makeover or beige suits.

Through it all, there's a longing for a simpler time, when crime seemed manageable and villains were easier to identify. The nostalgia isn't so much for Norman Rockwell's America as Jim Rockford's, when the

## THE WATCH LIST

### Deadliest Warrior

Tuesdays, 10 p.m., Spike

This brilliant fantasy smack-down is like a drunken argument in the world's dumbest bar: Who'd win in a fight – a samurai or a viking? Vlad the Impaler or Sun Tzu? The new season has Attila the Hun versus Alexander the Great. (Go, Huns!) Why didn't anybody think of this before?

### Party Down

Fridays, 10 p.m., Starz

Is this the *Melrose Place* of catering porn or a parody of a Bravo reality show? Both! A surprisingly poignant sitcom about Hollywood caterers, with Ken Marino (*The State*) and Megan Mullally (*Will & Grace*) carrying buffet trays. More shrimp cocktail, sir? **R.S.**

archetypal TV cop was a suave, cocky, good-looking jerk who got the job done but didn't rub our noses in the details of how he had to do it. Totally old-fashioned at heart, *Justified* stumps for every last cop-show cliché. We know from the get-go that Raylan won't shoot anybody who doesn't need shooting. And we'll never have to exercise ourselves figuring out who's really guilty and who isn't – one of the first times we see the archvillain, a Nazi drug dealer, he's shooting one of his henchmen for not having enough tattoos. That's cold.

Olyphant made his name as the sheriff on *Deadwood*, but where that show was brooding and existential, *Justified* inhabits a world where evil may be a mighty force, but it is nothing against a few well-placed dabs of hair gel. Olyphant is a tall glass of sarcastic quips, shrugs and meticulously groomed stubble – part redneck, part supermodel. Raylan's father is (of course) a criminal kingpin, and we can tell our hero has got unresolved issues with his dad because everybody he runs into asks him about it, from his co-workers to the perps to the perps' girlfriends. But that's as close as he ever gets to talking about his feelings or even really having them.

Like most cowpoke fantasies, *Justified* is a blood-drenched vision of law and order, yet one adapted to an era of unprecedented government power and beaten-down civil liberties. Usually, a show like this would have the lawman making speeches about how the guilty creeps always get away because of bleeding-heart judges or lefty lawyers. But who could say that after the past 10 years? At this point, the classic vigilante can't position himself as rebelling against the system, because the system has outflanked him on the right. This cowboy cop might want to be Sheriff Buford Pusser in *Walking Tall*, but in real life, Pusser actually got *defeated* running for re-election because his down-home constituents didn't really cotton to the idea of getting pulled over by a psycho with a baseball bat. Thankfully for *Justified*, TV studs don't have to worry about elections. **A**

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# Revenge of the Puppet

Hamid Karzai is trying to end the war in Afghanistan – but will the Obama administration let him?

★ By Robert Dreyfuss ★

**W**HEN HAMID KARZAI, the Afghan president installed by the United States and propped up by American blood and treasure during nine years of war, threatens to join the Taliban, it's fair to ask if the U.S. enterprise in Afghanistan has stopped making any sense.

In early April, just days after meeting with President Obama in Kabul, Karzai unleashed a series of angry outbursts that stunned U.S. officials. He compared American and NATO troops to invaders and occupiers. He warned that U.S. military operations threatened to turn the Taliban-led insurgency into a legitimate "national resistance." And he accused "foreigners" of trying to rig last year's presidential election against him. "They wanted to have a puppet regime, they wanted to have a servant government," Karzai declared. "If the international community pressures me more, I swear that I am going to join the Taliban."

To underline his point, Karzai traveled to China and Iran, and invited Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Kabul.

U.S. officials have been quick to portray Karzai as unbalanced, if not full-on crazy. Since taking office, he has tolerated rampant corruption at all levels of government, cut deals with violent warlords to bolster his power and stolen nearly a million votes in last year's election. Those who have observed Karzai firsthand say privately that he has verged on the edge of a nervous breakdown during his time in office and report that he has been seen to burst into tears during official meetings. "He's a difficult partner at best," says Bruce Riedel, a former CIA analyst who led the White House's initial review of Afghanistan policy last year. "He's prickly, he's proud, and he's very sensitive to the charge that he's a foreign tool."

But Karzai's eruption represents far more than personal pique. Nearly everyone, from Obama on down, admits that the Taliban

will eventually have to be incorporated into a reconfigured government in Kabul. The only question is when. Karzai – along with the United Nations, Afghans of all stripes and even some of Washington's partners in Europe – believes that the time to make peace with the Taliban is now, while the United States plans to expend years trying to gain more ground on the battlefield so it can negotiate from a position of greater strength. In essence, it's a debate over how many more lives must be lost before both sides lay down their arms. Karzai's insistence on not waiting to make a deal with the Taliban is nothing less than a full-frontal challenge to the Obama administration. If Karzai has his way, Washington could be forced to speed up the withdrawal of American troops currently targeted to begin in July 2011.

"By nature, Karzai is a conciliator," says Riedel, who supports the Obama administration's strategy. "In many ways, he's very un-Afghan. He's not a warlord. He's much



more of a consensus builder. Advocating a political process is very popular among Afghans. After all, they're the ones dying in the war, and they're more eager than anyone else to find a political solution."

**T**HE CLASH BETWEEN KABUL and the White House amped up sharply in January, when Karzai surprised the world at a high-profile international conference in London by announcing a major initiative aimed at ending the war. In sharp contrast to U.S. policy, which envisions peeling away low-level Taliban fighters by offering them jobs and cash, Karzai said he'd be willing to sit down with the Taliban's top military and political leaders – including Mullah Omar, the one-eyed Islamist radical who founded the insurgent group. "We must reach out to all of our countrymen, especially our disenchanted brothers," Karzai told the London gathering.

The initiative is motivated, in part, by self-preservation. "Karzai has to be there long after we're gone," says Christine Fair, an expert on Afghanistan at Georgetown University. "He doesn't want us to go, but he knows we're going to be gone one day. So he has to try to make a deal with the people who want to kill him."

Karzai's peace gesture threw the United States off balance. "It came out of nowhere," says Gautam Mukhopadhyaya, an Indian diplomat who closely tracks Afghan politics. Not only did Karzai proclaim his desire for talks with the enemy, he also outlined plans to convene an Afghan national council, called a *jirga* – scheduled to meet May 20th in Kabul – to create a national framework for dialogue with Taliban leaders. "People are desperate for peace," said Masoom Stanekzai, Karzai's national-security adviser.

Working closely with the United Nations – but without the approval of the U.S. – Karzai has orchestrated a series of moves designed to get a response from the Taliban. Behind the scenes, he reportedly carried out a quiet dialogue with a top Taliban commander, Mullah Baradar. Kai Eide, then the U.N. special representative in Kabul, also met separately with Baradar's associates and other delegates from the Taliban's leadership council, the Quetta Shura. "If you want relevant results, then you have to talk to the relevant person in authority," said Eide. "I think the time has come to do it." Karzai enacted a law to provide amnesty for violence committed before the U.S. invasion of 2001 – a measure that reassured Taliban leaders they would not be prosecuted for crimes committed during their rule. And, with Karzai's support, the U.N. removed five former Taliban officials from

the so-called List 1267, a U.N.-sponsored watch list that targets 137 current and former Taliban leaders.

To Washington's dismay, the peace initiative has started to pay off. In March, a delegation from one of the main insurgent groups allied with the Taliban, the Islamic Party, traveled to Kabul for meetings with Karzai and U.N. officials. Back in the 1980s, the party's leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, was the top recipient of U.S. aid in the CIA-sponsored jihad against the Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan. But when American troops invaded in 2001, Hekmatyar joined with the Taliban to wage war against the new occupation. Now, from his secret headquarters across the border in Pakistan's lawless tribal areas, Hekmatyar sent a team of negotiators to Kabul. They carried a 15-point peace plan calling for reconciliation and new elections, predicated on a flexible timetable for the withdrawal of U.S. and NATO troops. In talks with Karzai, Hekmatyar's representatives promised to persuade the Taliban to go along with the proposal.

"If the international troops accept and abide by our proposal and withdraw from the country according to the gradual timetable," said an Islamic Party spokesman, "then we will solve our internal problems

**K**ARZAI'S PEACE OFFENSIVE has provoked open hostility from Washington. The Obama administration's policy toward Afghanistan is a diplomatic version of "Shoot first, ask questions later." Before any talks with the Taliban can begin, the White House argues, U.S. forces in Afghanistan – bolstered by the two surges that Obama ordered last year, doubling the number of American troops – must deliver punishing blows to the Taliban. "The shift of momentum is not yet strong enough to convince the Taliban leaders that they are in fact going to lose," Secretary of Defense Robert Gates told Congress. "It's when they begin to have doubts whether they can be successful that they may be willing to make a deal. I don't think we're there yet." Other U.S. officials also trashed Karzai's peace offensive. Adm. Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, criticized the talks as "premature." Richard Holbrooke, Obama's special envoy to Afghanistan, expressed horror at the notion that Mullah Omar might be taken off the U.N.'s condemnation list. The U.S. military refuses to extend an olive branch by releasing Taliban insurgents held prisoner at Bagram Air Base, and in February the CIA worked with Pakistani intelligence

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**"Karzai has to be there after we're gone," says one expert. "So he has to make a deal with the people who want to kill him."**

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through political debates and negotiations. We will solve all our internal issues by coming together."

Mohammad Daoud Abedi, one of the Islamic Party negotiators who met with Afghan and U.N. officials in Kabul, told reporters that his group was specifically inspired by President Obama's declaration last December that U.S. troops would start to pull out of Afghanistan next year. While the insurgents would prefer that the withdrawal happen more quickly, Abedi said, the precise schedule was something that could be negotiated between the two sides. "If that's what the international community with the leadership of the United States of America is planning – to leave – we better make the situation honorable enough for them to leave with honor," he explained.

Abedi, an Afghan-American, then added a wry reference to former vice president Dick Cheney's hunting accident in 2006. Speaking about his feelings toward the United States, Abedi said, "How can I consider my own country my enemy? I am not Dick Cheney that I shoot my friends."

agents to shut down the peace process by arresting Mullah Baradar, the Taliban commander in talks with Karzai.

At heart, the difference between U.S. strategy and Karzai's approach is the difference between "reintegration" and "reconciliation." Reintegration, part of the "counterinsurgency" strategy being pursued by Obama, involves pulling insurgents out of the Taliban one by one and winning them over with promises of jobs and cash – usually after an area has been cleared and pacified by U.S. troops. By contrast, reconciliation involves reaching a political deal with Taliban commanders, offering them a share of political power in Kabul in exchange for a cease-fire.

"The reconciliation that Karzai is putting on the table is not the same as the reintegration that the United States is putting on the table," says Fair. "The U.S. believes that the Taliban is fighting because they're getting paid: If you knock them around a little bit, alter to some extent their cost-benefit calculus, they might be interested in reintegrating."

The problem with reintegration is that it requires the kind of military victory

Regular contributor ROBERT DREYFUSS wrote *"The Generals' Revolt"* in RS 1090.



that no superpower – not the British, not the Soviets, not the Americans – has ever pulled off in Afghanistan. The U.S. has neither enough troops nor the political will to sustain a decades-long nation-building effort that can clear the Taliban – village by village, and valley by valley – from the estimated two-thirds of the country it currently controls. Because the Taliban is supported by Pakistan – which created and financed the insurgency in the 1990s as a tool to guarantee that Afghanistan would remain in Pakistan's sphere of influence – it enjoys an isolated and nearly impregnable base of operations. And the Taliban has deep roots in the ethnic Pashtun population within Afghanistan, making it nearly impossible to identify and weed out. "The Taliban are an outgrowth of the people," says Chas Freeman, a former U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia. "The essence of the U.S. strategy is to separate the Taliban from the people – and that, in practice, means separating fathers from sons and sons from mothers."

The big test of the Obama administration's strategy will come this summer, when thousands of U.S. troops launch their ballyhooed offensive to take control of Kandahar, the second-largest city in Afghanistan. Together with the sprawling rural districts that surround it, Kandahar is the birthplace of the Taliban movement, and it remains largely under Taliban control. In February and March, a much smaller U.S. military offensive was unleashed against Marja, a farming community in neighboring Helmand province, in the heart of Afghanistan's poppy-growing region. Taken together, the Marja operation and the coming attack on Kandahar are meant to show the Taliban

that the United States can oust it from its most prized districts.

But Karzai, intent on striking a deal with the Taliban, opposed the Marja action. And in April, he traveled to Kandahar to assure tribal elders, many of whom support the Taliban, that he would not permit the United States to move into the city without the support of the local tribes. "I know you are worried about this operation," he told the elders. "There will be no operation until you are happy."

The head of the provincial council in Kandahar happens to be none other than Ahmed Wali Karzai, the president's half brother and a notoriously corrupt wheeler-dealer who is a reputed drug trafficker. But Ahmed Wali also serves as a liaison with some of the Taliban's leaders in the Kandahar region – ties that could prove vital if the government wants to negotiate a cease-fire with the insurgents. Such subtleties,

only at driving America's leading ally in Kabul into the arms of the very insurgents we are there to defeat. "The more Karzai feels threatened and endangered, the more we push him back on the people we'd like him to get rid of," says Ronald Neumann, a former U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan who knows Karzai well. "That's where he can find support."

**T**HIS PAST SUMMER, WHEN President Obama was conducting what turned out to be a months-long review of U.S. policy in Afghanistan, he found himself under enormous pressure from the Pentagon and his top generals – including Stanley McChrystal, the commander in Afghanistan, and David Petraeus, the head of the U.S. Central Command – to escalate the war. (See "The Generals' Revolt," RS 1090.) In the end, he gave the

## An American officer threatened to kill President Karzai's half brother: "I'm going to be watching every step you take."

however, are lost on the Americans. In a stunning display of both ignorance and arrogance, a U.S. military officer recently threatened to kill Ahmed Wali Karzai. "I'm going to be watching every step you take," the officer told the president's relative. "If I catch you meeting with an insurgent, I'm going to put you on the list. That means that I can capture or kill you."

That attitude, experts on Afghanistan warn, is exactly what is driving Karzai to seek peace with the enemy. So far, the Obama administration has succeeded

hawks what they wanted – tens of thousands of additional troops – but promised Vice President Joe Biden and other doves in the administration that he would begin withdrawing U.S. forces in July 2011.

But few observers expect the U.S. to meet that deadline. "Anyone who thinks we're seriously going to start pulling out serious numbers of troops by July is living in a fantasy world," says Riedel, the former CIA analyst. "We may even find ourselves in a position where General McChrystal says, 'I need more troops.'" Riedel

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: EVERETT COLLECTION; LAWRENCE JACKSON/THE WHITE HOUSE, DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"; EMANUEL DUINAND/NEWS.COM; CARLSBERG; MARK RALSTON/NEWS.COM; AP IMAGES; LEE SHARPE; TAMMIE ARROYO/AP IMAGES, DIGITALLY ALTERED BY "ROLLING STONE"; JANET JAIME; ROGELIO V. SOLIS/AP IMAGES; DEA

Obama gives NASA next mission: **land on asteroid.**



China invests \$35 billion in clean energy – nearly **double** U.S.



Bill Clinton on **deregulating** Wall Street derivatives: "I was wrong."



Feds charge Goldman Sachs with **fraud.**



Carlsberg brewers **strike** after company limits on-the-job drinking to three pints.



Half of all Tea Partiers say Sarah **Palin** **unqualified** to be president.



**THREAT ASSESSMENT**  
THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE SCARY

**WITH US**

Third grader gives **60** **goodie bags** of heroin to classmates.



Gay Mississippi teen banned from prom to be **grand marshal** of New York Pride parade.



Crucifix in Oklahoma church reveals **new reason** to worship Jesus.



Minority appeal of GOP **drops** under chairman Michael Steele.



Massachusetts divests **\$243 million** from big banks to protest credit-card gouging.



Grounded Norwegian prime minister **governs remotely** with iPad.

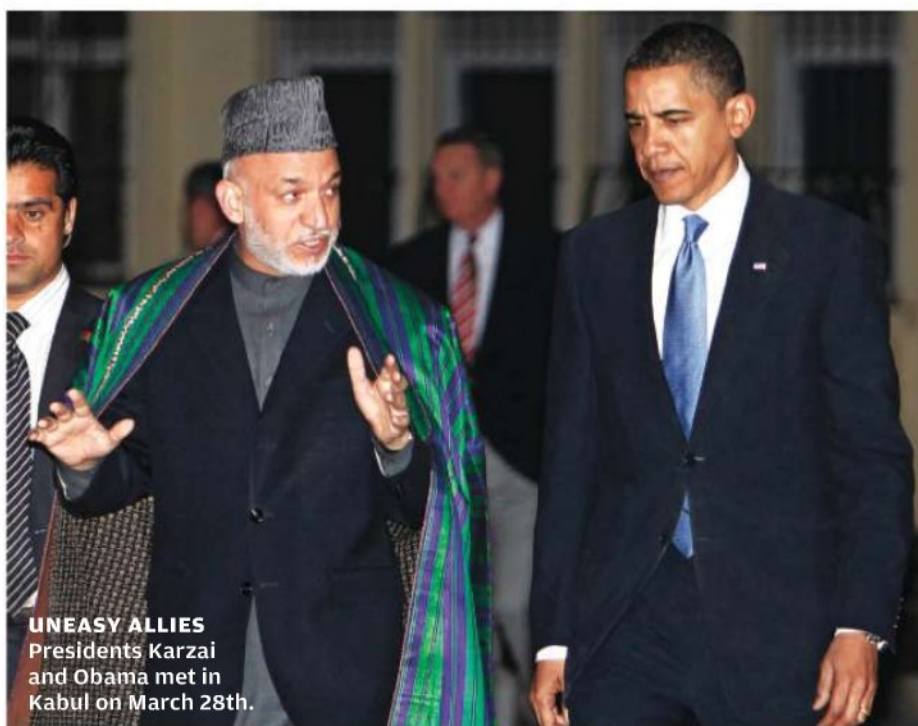




acknowledges that Obama will come under fire at home if he decides to extend the war, but he argues that it's a price the president can afford to pay: "If you look at this in terms of the politics, the frustration is going to come from the liberal wing of the Democratic Party."

In the end, though, the Obama administration may find itself forced to support Karzai's peace initiative. In fact, say longtime observers of Afghanistan, the White House may quietly be supporting the diplomacy behind the scenes, even as it blasts Karzai in public. "They've played their cards close to the chest," says James Dobbins, a former State Department official who led U.S. efforts to stabilize Afghan politics in 2001. "Certainly they're not opposed to talking to the Taliban on principle. It's not 'We don't talk to terrorists, and we never will.' That's not their position." Instead, he suggests, it's likely that the White House knows it will ultimately have to talk to the Taliban and is using the July 2011 deadline to pressure the insurgents to reach an accord. "The administration needs to decide whether a departure for the United States and NATO is something it will be prepared to agree to, as part of the endgame," Dobbins says. "You can imagine a situation in which a U.S. agreement to leave can have a salutary effect in Afghanistan."

For now, however, the Obama administration remains anxious about what, exactly, Karzai has in mind. "They're very nervous about what Karzai is going to agree to," says a former senior U.S. official with close ties to Afghanistan. "I suspect they're looking around for some sort of strategic agreement about what negotiations should look like." For many in the U.S. government, "strategic agreement" means forcing Karzai to slow



**UNEASY ALLIES**  
Presidents Karzai and Obama met in Kabul on March 28th.

down his efforts to court the Taliban and fall in line with the American strategy.

In fact, it's likely that concerted U.S. pressure *can* keep Karzai in line – after all, he's utterly dependent on U.S. financial assistance, and American troops are keeping him in power. According to insiders, he'll certainly get his arm twisted during his visit to Washington on May 10th. Still, with the deadline for withdrawal getting closer, Obama will soon find himself forced to choose, once again, between hawks and doves inside the administration. If, as is widely expected, the coming assault on Kandahar fails to make a dent in the Taliban's momentum, the president may have to start pulling up stakes in Afghanistan. "McChrystal's got until

2011 to show that his plan can work," says Freeman, the former ambassador.

The showdown with Karzai, insiders say, ultimately comes down to a matter of pride. "We are going through the motions to impart just enough stability to Afghanistan so that we can say we're going out with our heads held high," says Paul Pillar, the former chief Middle East analyst for the U.S. intelligence community. "It would be harder to go out under those terms if we smiled on Karzai starting to make deals with senior Taliban officials." To do so, he suggests, would make it appear as if Obama had cut a deal with the very people we invaded Afghanistan in order to crush. Which, in the end, is exactly what the president will have to do.





# The Feds vs. Goldman

The government's case against Goldman Sachs barely begins to target the depths of Wall Street's criminal sleaze

★ By Matt Taibbi ★

ON THE DAY THE SECURITIES and Exchange Commission filed suit against Goldman Sachs for securities fraud, shares in the company plunged 12.8 percent, closing at \$160.70. The market, it seemed, was finally passing judgment on a decade of high-stakes Wall Street scammyery that left America threatening Nigeria, Indonesia and Belarus on the list of the world's most corrupt economies.

A few days later, Goldman announced its first-quarter numbers. Profits were up 91 percent, to a staggering \$3.4 billion. Compensation and bonuses soared to \$5.5 billion, up from \$4.7 billion in the first quarter of 2009. Battered in the press, Goldman was raking up on the bottom line. So investors once again leapt into Goldman's arms, pushing the stock as high as \$166.50, not far from where it was even before news of the SEC suit broke.

Goldman isn't dead – far from it. But this new SEC suit officially places it at the center of a raging national discussion about the hopelessly fucked state of American business ethics. As a halting, first-step attempt at financial regulatory reform makes its way toward a vote in the Senate, the government has finally thrown open the door and let a few of the rottener skeletons tumble out.

On the surface, the failure-to-disclose rap being leveled at Goldman feels like a niggling technicality, the Wall Street equivalent of a tax-evasion charge against Al Capone. The bank will try and – who knows – might even succeed in defending itself in a court of law against these charges. But in the court of public opinion it was doomed the instant the SEC decided to put this ghastly black comedy of a fraud case on the street for everyone to see. Just as Pittsburgh Steeler Ben Roethlisberger will never recover from the image of him (allegedly) waving his dick at a scared 20-year-old coed in the darkened hallway of a Georgia nightclub, Goldman may never bounce back from the SEC's brutal blow-by-blow account of how the bank conspired with a hedge-fund magnate to bend one gullible business partner after another over the edge of the subprime housing market.

Here's the *CliffsNotes* version of the scandal: Back in 2007, Harvard-educated hedge-fund whiz John Paulson (no relation to then-Treasury secretary and former Goldman chief Hank Paulson) smartly decided the housing boom was a mirage. So he asked Goldman to put together a multi-billion-dollar basket of crappy subprime investments that he could bet against. The bank gladly complied, taking a \$15 million fee to do the deal and letting Paul-

close to its customers – in particular a German bank called IKB and a Dutch bank called ABN-AMRO – the full nature of Paulson's involvement with the deal. Neither investor knew that the portfolio they were buying into had essentially been put together by a financial arsonist who was rooting for it all to blow up.

Goldman even kept its own collateral manager – a well-known and respectable company called ACA – in the dark. The bank hired the firm to approve the bad mortgages being selected by Paulson, but never bothered to tell ACA that Paulson was actually betting *against* the deal. ACA thought Paulson was long, when actually he was short. That led to the awful comedy of ACA staffers holding meeting after meeting with Goldman and Paulson, and continually coming away confused as to why their supposedly canny financial partners kept kicking any decent mortgage out of the deal. In one ACA internal e-mail, the company wonders aloud why Paulson excluded mortgages issued by Wells Fargo – a bank that traditionally created high-quality mortgages. "Did [they] give a reason why they kicked out all the Wells deals?" the quizzical e-mail reads.

The climactic scene of this absurd vaudeville came on February 2nd, 2007, when Goldman vice president Fabrice Tourre – a French-born slimeball who would be the only Goldman individual named in the suit – showed up with Paulson & Co. at ACA's New York offices. At this meeting, both Paulson's people and Tourre presumably pretended, for the benefit of their sucker partner ACA, that they were putting together a deal they actually believed in. One has to imagine Tourre and the Paulson contingent overacting with Shatnerian intensity to convince the numbskull ACA guys that they really, really thought subprime mortgages lent out to exurban Floridians with shit credit scores were awesome investments. During the meeting, Tourre sent a damning e-mail to another Goldman staffer: "I am at this aca paulson meeting, this is surreal."

Tourre would brag in other e-mails that while the housing market was about to



In Goldman's twisted worldview, clients should expect to be burned by their own bankers, as a matter of course.

son choose some of the toxic mortgages in the portfolio, which would come to be called Abacus.

What Paulson jammed into Abacus was mortgages lent to borrowers with low credit ratings, and mortgages from states like Florida, Arizona, Nevada and California that had recently seen wild home-price spikes. In metaphorical terms, Paulson was choosing, as sexual partners for future visitors to the Goldman bordello, a gang of IV drug users, Haitians and hemophiliacs, then buying life-insurance policies on the whole orgy. Goldman then turned around and sold this poisonous stuff to its customers as good, healthy investments.

Where Goldman broke the rules, according to the SEC, was in failing to dis-



blow up, his fabulous French self would be left standing in a pile of money when it was all over. "More and more leverage in the system," he wrote. "The whole building is about to collapse anytime now. . . . Only potential survivor, the fabulous Fab . . . standing in the middle of all these complex, highly leveraged, exotic trades he created!"

These flighty Tourre e-mails boasting of cashing in on a disaster and chuckling over the "surreal" experience of power-lying right in the face of a business partner are Goldman's very own Ben Roethlisberger drunken dick-waving moment. It is hard to imagine any company from now on doing business with Goldman and *not* picturing its fruitcake executives text-boasting to each other about the pleasures of screwing over their own clients.

Goldman has issued three denials with regard to the SEC charges. The first was a very curt "this is all bullshit" press release, issued on the day the complaint came out, in which it called the charges "completely unfounded in law."

Then, after their PR people had a few minutes to think about things, Goldman issued a second release claiming that it lost \$90 million on the deal, and therefore couldn't have been doing anything wrong. While this may be true – and we only have their word for it that it is – who the hell cares? What Goldman is being accused of is lying to its clients. How much money they did or didn't make is totally irrelevant. In fact, if Goldman really did lose money knowing what they knew about this deal, all that proves is that they're morons as well as sleazebags.

The third press release paved the way for the inevitable deployment of the Dr. Richard Kimble/one-armed-man defense – i.e., that Fabrice Tourre did it all, acting alone. "Goldman Sachs would never condone one of its employees misleading anyone," the release insisted. "Were there ever to emerge credible evidence that such behavior indeed occurred here, we would be the first to condemn it and to take all appropriate actions."

So within the space of a few days, Goldman issued three different explanations, which progressed from (a) we absolutely, positively didn't do it, to (b) if we did do it, we didn't make any money doing it, and finally on to (c) if somebody did it, it was only that French cat Tourre, and here's his head if you want it. These guys couldn't find the truth if it was sitting in their lap playing the ukulele, and that's the basic problem that the entire financial-services sector – an industry that requires trust and confidence to thrive – is struggling to overcome.

**J**UST UNDER A YEAR AGO, WHEN we published "The Great American Bubble Machine" [RS 1082/1083], accusing Goldman of betting against its clients at the end of the housing boom, virtually the entire smugocracy of sneering Wall Street cognoscenti scoffed at the notion that the Street's leading investment bank could be guilty of such a thing. Attracting particular derision were the comments of one of my sources, a prominent hedge-fund chief, who said that when Goldman shorted the subprime-mortgage market at the same time it was selling subprime-backed products to its customers, the bait-and-switch maneuver constituted "the heart of securities fraud."

CNBC's house blowhard, Charlie Gasparino, laughed at the "securities fraud" line, saying, "Try proving that one." *The Atlantic's* online Randian cyber-shill, Megan

toxic mortgages and swaps in order to get short of them with sucker bookies like AIG. But – and this seems funny in retrospect – I foolishly dismissed those tales as being too conspiratorial. I thought it was bad enough that Goldman was shorting the subprime market even as it was selling toxic subprime-backed securities to chumps on the open market. The notion that the bank would actually go out and create big balls of crap that would be designed to fail seemed too nuts even for my tastes.

In the year since – and this, to me, is the main lesson from the SEC case against Goldman – the public has quickly come to accept that when it comes to the once-great institutions of modern Wall Street, literally no deal that makes money is too low to be contemplated.

The nearly identical case involving a Merrill Lynch mortgage deal called Norma now making its way through the courts is just one example. There is more fraud out there, and everyone knows it: front-running, manipulation of the commodities markets, trading ahead of interest-rate moves, hidden losses, Enron-esque accounting, Ponzi schemes in the precious-metals markets, you name it. We gave these people nearly a trillion bailout dollars, and no one knows what service they actually provide beyond fraud, gross self-indulgence and the occasional transparently insincere public apology.

The Goldman case emerges as a symbol of all this brokenness, of a climate in which all financial actors are now supposed to expect to be burned and cheated, even by their own bankers, as a matter of course. (As part of its defense, Goldman pointed out that IKB is a "sophisticated CDO market participant" – translation: too fucking bad for them if they trusted us.) It would be nice to think that the SEC suit is aimed at this twisted worldview as much as at the actual offense. Some observers believe the case against Goldman was timed to pressure Wall Street into acquiescing to Sen. Chris Dodd's loophole-ridden financial-reform bill, which probably won't do much to prevent cases like the Abacus fiasco. Or maybe it's just pure politics – Democrats dropping the proverbial horse's head in Goldman's bed to get their fig-leaf financial-reform effort passed in time for the midterm elections.

Whatever the long-range motives, the immediate effect of the lawsuit is to put Wall Street's crazy fraud ethos on trial in the court of public opinion. For now, at the end of the first quarter, Goldman and most of the other big banks are still winning that case. But the second quarter might be a different story.



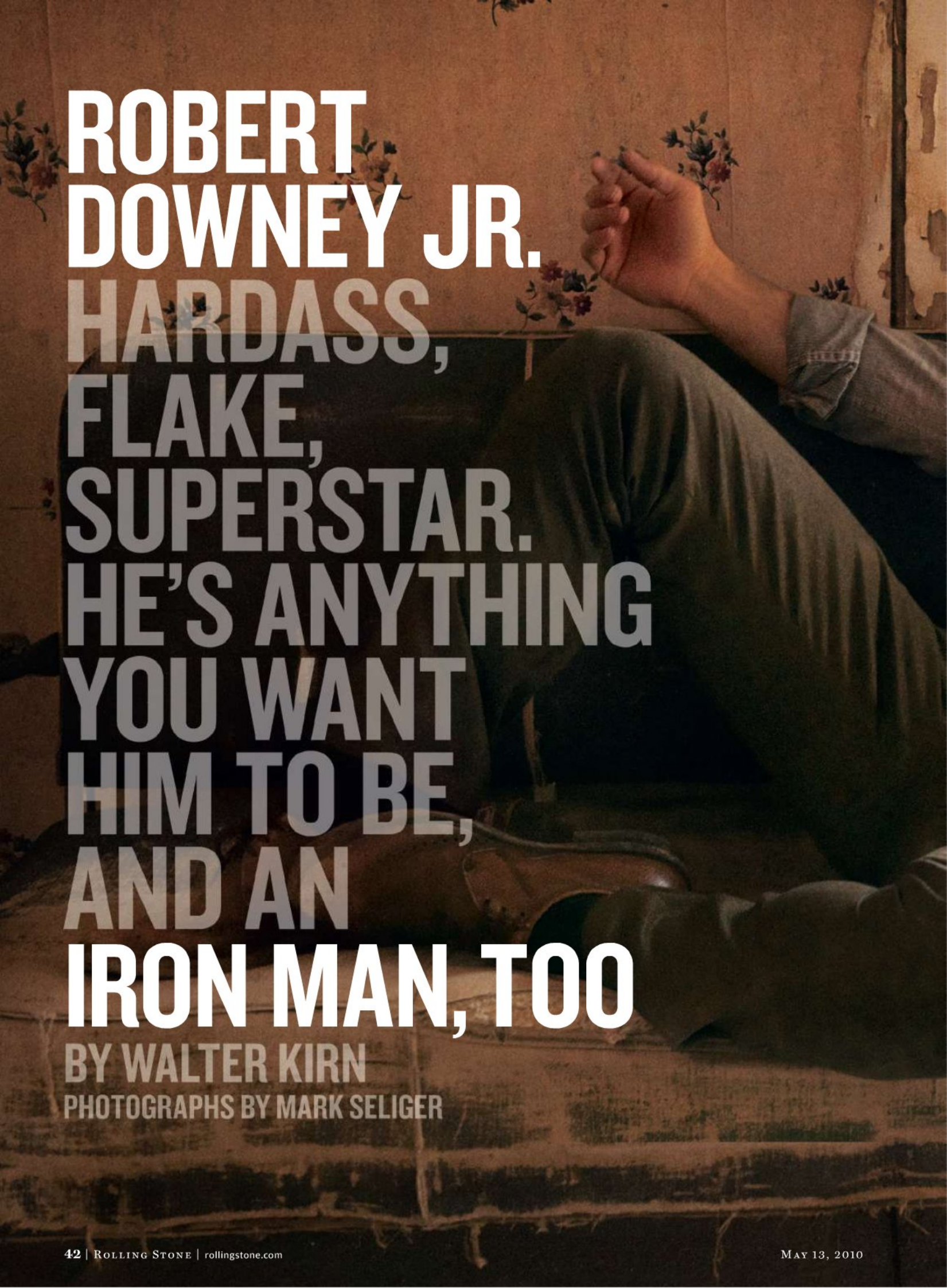
**In the court of public opinion, Goldman was doomed the instant the SEC put this ghastly black comedy on the street.**

McArdle, said *ROLLING STONE* had "absurdly" accused Goldman of committing a crime, arguing that "Goldman's customers for CDOs are not little grannies who think a bond coupon is what you use to buy denture glue." Former *Wall Street Journal* reporter Heidi Moore hilariously pointed out that Goldman wasn't the only one betting against the housing market, citing the short-selling success of – you guessed it – John Paulson as evidence that Goldman shouldn't be singled out.

The truth is that what Goldman is alleged to have done in this SEC case is even worse than what all these assholes laughed at us for talking about last year.

Prior to the "Bubble Machine" piece, I had heard rumors that Goldman had gone out and intentionally scared up





**ROBERT  
DOWNEY JR.  
HARDASS,  
FLAKE,  
SUPERSTAR.  
HE'S ANYTHING  
YOU WANT  
HIM TO BE,  
AND AN  
IRON MAN, TOO**

**BY WALTER KIRN**  
**PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK SELIGER**









SITTING IN a nylon lawn chair on an empty swath of Venice Beach between the tattoo-parlor-lined boardwalk and the vacant, flat gray ocean, Robert Downey Jr. is dressed for privacy in a hooded black wool sweater and an enormous pair of bug-eyed "As Seen on TV" Blublocker sunglasses that make him look like the famous FBI sketch of the Unabomber. He wears baggy drawstring lounge pants of the sort that most men only put on when all their other pants are in the dryer and they have to answer the doorbell. The loose clothes allow the range of movement – the freedom to twist, flex, stretch, fidget and even roll around in the sand or lie on his back and gaze up at the heavens – that helps Downey, 45, discharge his roiling energy when he's on a verbal run. Sober and successful, the billion-dollar pillar of the *Sherlock Holmes* and *Iron Man* franchises is at least as vibrant and cyclonic as the old stoned and troubled tabloid cover model from a decade ago. A conversation with him is a deep-space particle storm, parentheses-within-parentheses, digression upon digression, a nonlinear but not nonsensical cosmic outpouring. Downey refuses to follow any kind of script, never quite coming into focus, always in thrall to another idea. That's the essence of his mind and spirit, and, arguably, of his genius as an actor.

"Let's do word association now," he says.

"Viral," I begin. I don't know why.

"Redundant," Downey responds. I don't know why.

"Esoteric," I say.

He pauses. "Approachable."

I draw a blank. This game isn't the jazzy Method-acting exercise I was hoping for. Maybe Downey's just tired. He's a serious devotee of Wing Chun, a kung fu discipline, but today he has been grumbling about a shoulder injury. For now, though, he's resisting taking an Advil, a reflection of his rigorous commitment to all-natural self-improvement.

I try a different tack: "Vaginal," I say. "Parfait."

It's perfect. It's more than perfect. It's creepy, elegant, uncanny. And it came to Downey without a pause, as though this absurd linguistic delectable – "vaginal parfait," I can't stop saying it – already existed in the collective unconscious, and he simply reached out and retrieved it.

The volleys continue but gradually lose vigor, stalling out on "remorse" and "lick." Downey, whose artistry is based on instinct – on his faith in and obedience to instinct; witness his warped blackface turn in *Tropic Thunder*, a performance that's like a hunch or a whim whipped up into a compulsion – knows precisely when to get back to business.

The only problem is it's tough to know exactly what our business is. *Iron Man 2*? Downey doesn't bring it up. Later on, when I press him, he'll say that making it was "the greatest professional lesson of my life," leaving me with the sense that "lesson," in this case, is a euphemism for "ordeal."

He'd rather stick to matters more abstract. "Let me put it this way," he says, responding to an open-ended question about his general state of mind these days, "I am in the continual process of transcending fear-based rituals." I ask him to expand, to clarify. He twists around in his chair and tilts his head, first one way, then another, then another. The adjustments never stop. For Downey, who trained long ago as a ballet dancer and still moves like one – arched spine, squared shoulders, feet planted but lightly planted, neck

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straight, chin raised – even thinking is a physical activity.

"Does it involve a disempowered sense of magical thinking, or am I actually in the stream?" he tells me, his manner a blend of meditative detachment and locked-on, soul-to-soul engagement as he explains how rituals he deems "fear-based" differ from all the other kinds. "Is it spontaneous or is it premeditated based on some sort of need to control?"

It's easy to shrug off such utterances as La-La Land New Age mumbo jumbo, but it's less easy when the person reciting it is such a stupendous testament to its restorative potential. Downey – the new clean-urine Downey, who's been the new Downey for so many years now that he's become the ordinary Downey – is a recovery-movement, power-of-positive-thinking, quest-for-enlightenment best-case scenario. Before day's end, I'll watch him hug and kiss his slim and trim, serenity-radiating producing partner and wife of five years, Susan. It's a real hug and kiss that exhibits real affection. I'll stand over him as he plays, through his computer, a song by his 16-year-old son, Indio. It's a real song of real passion and prowess, and Downey's absorption in it is also real. I'll observe his epicurean sipping of a fruit-infused organic soda. It's a real instance of joyful liquid refreshment. Downey not only seems stable and decontaminated, he seems buttressed and distilled.

His talk of illumination and liberation becomes marginally more intelligible once you accept that his private dialect and the hybrid cosmology behind it is a form of mental music rather than a fully reasoned system. "In the moment, if you zero out your board," he says, leaving me to assume that by "the board" he means something like a mixing board or, perhaps, the inner-mental scoreboard that people use to record their wins and losses in life, "anything is possible." In a similar vein – elusive but evocative – he describes a career phase he passed through after the years of blazing self-immolation but prior to the current era of ever-striving, perpetual self-scrutiny: "In the Joseph Campbell world of no longer being on anyone else's path, I'm out there and it's leafy and green and there's abundance, but I don't think it's amounting to anything more than survival in the jungle."

Translation, I think: He was cruising. And it bored him.

THE TAO OF DOWNEY IS FUZZY and enigmatic, but its principles, properly applied, seem to get results. Once he'd cleaned up and zeroed out his board, Downey prepared himself for the next stage – the dimensional phase shift that's made him what he is now, the star of a superhero sequel that's poised for one of the highest-grossing openings in movie history, the







head of a growing production company (his staff answers the phone, "Team Downey") and the owner of both an ultramodern Venice office building and an Edenic multi-acre Malibu oceanview estate – by doing artistic flexibility exercises augmented by ceremonial white magic.

"Careerwise, I was setting them up," he says of the years preceding his breakthrough. "There's a little *Zodiac* there, a little Fincher here, some *Shaggy Dog*, got the insurance handled, then boom!" The boom was the starring role in *Iron Man*, which Downey had unabashedly been coveting. The prospect of playing a comic-book superhero not only didn't strike him as an offense against the devotion to complexity that had earned him steady critical approval and actor's-actor credibility, he regarded it as an invigorating outrage, "absolutely viable in its profanity," whose reverberations would shock him back to life – a better life. So he did some astral-plane conjuring. Before his *Iron Man* screen test, he built, for real, from physical materials, an "altar to the possibility of self" out of "some intuitively gathered objects" that included a picture of the superhero and – it gets spooky here – "a sunstone wand."

Downey's Aquarian trippiness and his meta-mega conceptual answers to basic questions (of his unexpected emergence as today's pre-eminent interpreter of oversize iconic roles, he says, "I love it when the least likely blank becomes a blank, because it reminds me that things are not as prohibitive as I think they are when I'm neutral") make him hard to interview in any conventional, structured way, but they also make him a joy to bullshit with. Downey has the kind of mind whose doors of perception are always unlatched, open to all sorts of far-fetched possibilities. He's fascinated by the fringes of science and conspiracy – whether there exists a language of birds, for instance. Or what the military's really been up to at Long Island's Brookhaven National Laboratory, where, Downey says, researchers have been conducting secret experiments to provide "supersoldiers" with an apparatus capable of generating "three levels" of cloaking: "Hidden," "Invisible" and "Gone." Does Downey really believe such out-there stuff or is it, in his words, a fanciful "hydroponic sonic" amusement? That's unclear and probably irrelevant. He's a mental omnivore. He'll eat almost anything, ideawise, or he'll at least chew on it. What he swallows is another matter. That's partly because the psychedelia springs from a common-sense-filled, well-informed, experience-tempered and morally solid soul. In fact, he's something of an old-school hardass.

Does he think drugs should be legalized? No way, not even marijuana, which he calls "the biggest ambition crusher of



## Family Ties

At this year's Academy Awards with his wife, Susan (1). In Rome in April with his son, Indio (2). Downey as a boy in New York (3). With his dad, Robert Downey Sr., who directed his son in 1997's *Hugo Pool* (4).



them all" and bemoans as a singularly "insidious" substance because it's widely regarded as benign. "Pot, for me, is, just take the sharpest table, round out the corners, and then keep wondering why you keep gouging your knees on it. Because you see it as something different than it is."

He also has surprising views on prison life, whose depictions in the media are "two-dimensional," he feels, and over-emphasize its supposed brutality. From 1999 to 2000, Downey was an inmate in a California state prison due to his infamous repeated failures to zero out the board narcoticswise during the mid-to-late Nineties. "When the door clicks shut, then you are safe," he says. "There is nothing aside from a rogue correctional officer that can do you harm if you have the right cellie. You are actually in the safest place on Earth. Safe from the intruders. From anything that might thwart the mortal

coil." As long as you don't buy dope in prison: "If you follow those impulses, you are going to be very indebted to someone who is too much of a public-safety threat to even just be in jail."

But Downey's most old-fashioned opinion of all concerns the greatness, creativity and transformative vitality of Los Angeles. He won't hear a word against the place, or against the entertainment business. "In and of itself," he says, his voice firm and formal with municipal patriotism, "it is, as titled, a city of angels." People who view L.A. more cynically and come to it thinking they'll beat the odds – the unfavorable odds that have beaten others like them – are doomed to lose, he says, and have nothing to blame for their eventual failures but their negative preconceptions. "I love a bit of bitterness, but if you want to immerse yourself in a situation where your bitterness can be fully and calculably justified,

WALTER KIRN is the author of five novels, including *Up in the Air*.



welcome. Come here and see if now you are just in a different part of the casino."

The sun, a pale diffuse blur behind the clouds, has fallen almost to the horizon. It's cold on the beach, and Downey pulls his hood tight and wraps his arms around himself. The talk dies down and our attention shifts to a peculiar little drama that's been going on all afternoon a few yards beyond our chairs. Downey's husky aide-de-camp, a guy named Jimmy Rich with little room remaining for new tattoos on his ink-covered beefy arms, is squatting amid a litter of wires, batteries and instruction booklets, preparing to launch a model rocket. Why? No explanation. Maybe it's a courteous attempt to give a visiting journalist a catchy visual metaphor for Downey's trajectory from addict to superstar. Or maybe the launch is just a way to stir up the neurons of the boss, who kicked narcotics but still needs little thrills to maintain a natural buzz.

The rocket is finally ready. Downey de-

don't appear to be working at all. Their mission is to advance what Downey calls "the brand." He seems to enjoy his role as an executive and to savor the lingo of modern management-science as much as the language of quantum psycho-mythology. He characterized his motive in forming his team "as trying to get an infrastructure to flex and pressure-mold to the situation."

But our rendezvous at HQ is not to be. Half an hour before I set out for Venice, my cellphone rings: "It's Downey," he says. He alludes to a frustrating morning at the office, to some sort of hassle or squabble that tried his patience, and informs me that he's on the way to my hotel. His impulsive decision to split from Team Downey endears him to me, I'll admit, because it seems to run counter, in an all too human way, to certain hard, definitive statements he made yesterday about self-discipline and maturity that left me feeling wimpy, soft, chaotic and like an all-around inferior being. "The line is the line and the way

this evening. Downey reserves two slots a week – paid in advance – with a therapist he calls "the best shrink in America." One session is devoted to regular maintenance of his relationship with his wife. The other is a "floaters" to be used as needed. He and Susan can settle the problem at tonight's session, he says. The prospect seems to relax him. He turns the music up.

The array of problem-solving machinery that Downey relies on to protect himself from his own weaknesses and screw-ups is no mere celebrity-lifestyle amenity. Not in his case, anyway. "The ramifications of a little slip are not what they used to be," he told me yesterday. "It's not kid stuff anymore." The truth is that kid stuff, for Downey, was never kid stuff. It was crack cocaine and heroin, publicized courtroom proceedings, incarcerations. His first marriage, to the actress Deborah Falconer, sunk into such misery and conflict that Downey spent his 30th birthday curled up outside on the ground in drug withdrawal

## "I'M AT A POINT WHERE NOTHING SHORT OF MY BEST SHOT AT RIGHTEOUS EXISTENCE WILL DO. THE RAMIFICATIONS OF A SLIP ARE NOT WHAT THEY USED TO BE. IT'S NOT KID STUFF ANYMORE."

clines to take the small control box, so Jimmy steps back from the pad and flicks the switch. Nothing. He fusses with some wires, tries again, and the tapered toy missile whooshes up in a smooth platonic arc at whose apogee the parachute opens and is captured by a slight breeze that causes the rocket to slowly retrace its course and softly land just a few feet from the spot where it left the sand.

Downey is wonder-struck by the elegant spectacle. He practically levitates out of his chair. Imagining and manifesting amazing outcomes is his bag these days. The launch was another one. Grace abounds.

"You fucking handled it, dude," he says to Jimmy.

That was Day One, Venice Beach. Many spiritual principles were discussed, many theories of self-overcoming were advanced, the brilliant nonsense term "vaginal par-fait" was coined, and all ended well, with the lovely, on-target landing of a nifty toy projectile that seemed to embody the movie star's charmed new life.

Day Two was a bit messier.

**T**HE PLAN TODAY WAS FOR ME TO meet Downey at his headquarters, a concrete modernist aboveground bunker whose main floor resembles a mellow war room manned by 10 or so casually dressed young folk who are so generationally at ease with computers and touch-screen smartphones that they

is the way," he said. Also: "I've been led to a point where nothing short of my best shot at righteous existence will do." And this one, the most uncompromising of all: "For a certain kind of individual, I believe that the way to freedom is by just shoveling irrevocable responsibility on their actions."

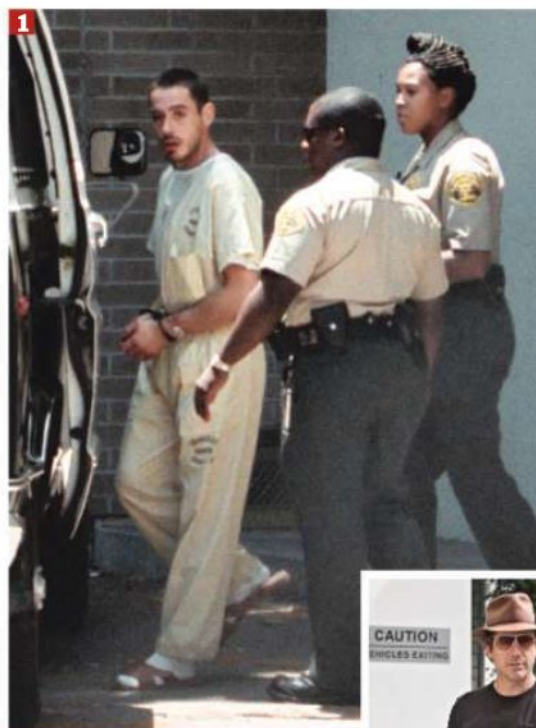
Downey pulls up in front of the hotel in a snazzy white Audi SUV so showroom-virginal and luminous, from its black, immaculate, dust-free tires to its clean-to-the-point-of-invisibility windshield, that it might be a special movie-stars-only model. He's alone in the car: no driver, no assistant and no fame-concealing hooded sweater. Yesterday, he was a person with a plan – help the reporter do his job, set him up with a lawn chair and a rocket launch and a picnic basket of healthy snacks – but today he's in a whatever-happens-happens mood. He's playing the Doobie Brothers on his stereo, clearly uninterested in seeming hip, and he's griping about the costly intercom that was just installed in his new house. He complains that the keypad lacks a button that will put him directly through to Indio – the feature he most desired. He complained to his wife that the absence of this button made the system useless to him, and when she urged him to settle down, he aggressively defended his prerogative to voice dissatisfaction with a flawed product that he'd paid good money for. He left the matter unresolved, he tells me, because he has a couples-therapy session scheduled for

while his wife glared down at him, shivering with fury. The falls were typically followed by a comeback that only rendered the next plunge steeper, scarier.

Part of the problem, strangely, was Downey's stubborn professionalism and stamina – or perhaps his pride in them. "It used to be that you could throw me out of the back of a party van onto the set, give me a tuna melt, and I could function." This ability to work while hurting "was the essence. It was my self-esteem," he says. "It's so sad, it's beautiful. It so speaks to the human condition. There's something in that, that in an adolescent way, is a version of honor."

Today, instead of expounding on the insights, regimens and beliefs that he credits for ending his long and gruesome spree, he seems compelled to refresh his memories of it. He drives up into the Hollywood Hills to show me the first house he bought after gaining a foothold in the industry, and then it's down to Sunset Boulevard to cruise past the sites of his nocturnal delinquencies, which he shared with party-hardy pals such as former teen idol Leif Garrett, whose company in bars and clubs, says Downey, "always kicked things up a notch." He recalls his fondness for metal clubs and hipper joints like the Flaming Colossus (which one of his buddies nicknamed Flemish Colostomy), and his affection for the cult band Faster Pussycat. He also recalls his empty feeling when all the





### Downey's Second Act

The actor has staged one of the most remarkable comebacks in Hollywood history. At a Malibu court for one of his many drug arrests in 1996 (1). With *Iron Man 2* director Jon Favreau (2). With Zach Galifianakis and director Todd Phillips on the set of the upcoming film *Due Date* (3). The "Team Downey" exec in Beverly Hills (4).

nightspots closed at 4 a.m. and his sense of relief when the action resumed at noon.

Driving west, toward the coast, in the new Audi whose complicated dashboard befuddles him, he cranks up an obscure Elvis Costello tune, "The Long Honeymoon." He dreams of collaborating with Costello someday to create a musical or stage show whose details he's rather vague about and which he has yet to mention to Costello. Might happen, might not. Downey is full of such ideas and schemes, including a few fairly detailed movie scenarios, but he's saddled with a heavy schedule nowadays, thanks to his bankability, his dynamism and his seeming immunity to overexposure. Later this year, he begins shooting the *Sherlock Holmes* sequel. Also being filmed is a 3-D space movie called *Gravity*, in which he'll play an astronaut trapped on a crippled space station that he's desperately trying to repair.

As we drive up the coast, Downey explains the incident at the office that ticked him off today. It began with his decision to cancel his family's annual trip to the Coachella music festival. There were logistical reasons for his decision, but his main consideration was parental: He was taking

his son on vacation to Italy soon and felt that the music-festival excursion, which would entail missed school days, was one indulgence, one luxury too many. Downey didn't want to spoil the boy. Before he was able to give his son the news, though—news that Downey knew wouldn't go down well and would require him to be firm—a Team Downey member called ahead and spilled the beans. Downey felt that his fatherly rights had been usurped, and he let the offender know it. Boss not happy.

We eat lunch at a Malibu seaside shack where Downey drinks a Dr Pepper because the soft drink is tied in, marketing-wise, with *Iron Man 2* and he wants to be loyal to the cause. When the song "A Whiter Shade of Pale" drifts down from a speaker in the ceiling, he shakes his head in a moody, reflective way and tells me that it's the saddest tune there is. Why is that, he wonders? The puzzle goes unsolved. I rupture the melancholy moment by asking the inevitable question that most actors of Downey's caliber and status answer in the affirmative: Does he have any desire to direct? Not really. "What do you think I've been doing for the past five years?" he says.

A few minutes later he's pressing a button to open the gate of the house he's been renovating for the better part of a year. It's landscaped and styled to a point of flawless storybook unreality. The fruit on the trees looks hung by hand, it's so evenly spaced on the expertly trimmed branches. The walking paths are so smoothly raked and groomed and defined by such neat, unbroken edges that they look like miniature roads in fairyland. The house's interior isn't quite as polished. The rooms aren't fully furnished yet, and though they're spotless, they feel a bit austere.

"This is the worst coffee machine ever," Downey grumbles in the kitchen, trying to brew espresso with a device that makes him wait and wait for his caffeine fix while a tiny green light on its side turns on and off, apparently requesting the user's patience with some obscure internal ongoing process. "How of all the online options did I pick this one, Blinky the Japanese Face-Fucker," says Downey. He's joking, of course, and exaggerating his bitterness, but at some level he seems genuinely irritated. First the inadequate intercom. Now this. That's when the Team member who jumped the gun and let Downey's son



know there would be no music festival appears in the kitchen doorway. His comportment is sheepish, and Downey doesn't look at him as the employee tries to mend things by announcing that he's recorded, for Downey's amusement as a martial artist, an Ultimate Fighting Championship special. The boss isn't cold or scary, just elsewhere, absent, as though he's taking a nonexistent phone call.

After we drink our coffee, Downey walks me around the handsome, expansive grounds, stopping to chat with squads of gardeners who are busy clipping, tamping and digging. One of them indirectly indicates that a tractor might prove helpful in his efforts, and Downey promises to buy one for him immediately, then passes on and quips, "See? Even the infractions are on me." I think I understand his state of mind. The little never-ending burdens of being landed and respectable after being, not so long ago, lost in space and notoriously disreputable, are wearing on him slightly, just perhaps. "The problem is," he cracks, "you have to have a double garage to afford the upkeep."

There's a Gatsby-like quality to Downey's manner as he strolls around

always be here. We'll never fucking move from here. Crazy."

Speaking of the missus, it's time, Downey tells me, to head back down the coast for the therapy session he mentioned earlier when he brought up his tantrum about the lousy new intercom: "I need to explain my reaction to my wife for 90 minutes with a trained professional."

**W**HEN DOWNEY TURNS ONTO the highway in the Audi, the nagging memories and lingering traumas all pour out of him suddenly, unprompted – a caustic, comic, cathartic cascade of words and images and energies that may have been pushing against his skull all day. They emerge that rapidly, almost without volition. It's 1996 again, the year when it all finally caught up with him: not just the law, but justice in the deepest sense. And in the nick of time, the way he tells it.

"This is historically where, years ago, in a Ford F-150, right when the light turned green, and I'd just made it back from some heinous interaction with the highly toxic – you know the kind of girl where you're

like an engineer-for-Seals-and-Crofts-turned-haute-couture-coke-dealer – it was the only coke that ever tasted as good as the coke I did with my dad and Jack Nicholson... Here's what I remember: I get back to the house after this whole first arrest debacle, I remember that I'd had a party there before all this, with the son of a local phenom. He and his buddies came over in Dad's old Jaguar, which is so fast the birds can't get out of the way. They were like beer-and-chitlins types with money, and I proceeded to take a massive piece of fucking black-tar heroin out of one of my clown pockets, put it on a paper plate, heat up a coat hanger, do the longest fucking Reynolds Wrap tube roll in history, and get these guys so fucking gowed out – five fucking Manchurian Candidates in my living room for two days – and then I got busted. And I'm thinking, 'Where's all that great coke?' And here I was needing to anesthetize like never before. The wife has moved out, the kid's gone, my life is a fucking babyshambles, and I suddenly make the neuropathic connection that there's nowhere *the coke* can be but the garbage, and I fucking dig in the thing and there it is, and it's so fucking pure and so clean and

## **"AFTER I WAS BAILED OUT OF JAIL BY MY DEALER'S BOYFRIEND, I REMEMBER I HAD THE ONLY COKE THAT EVER TASTED AS GOOD AS THE COKE I DID WITH MY DAD AND JACK NICHOLSON."**

the splendid all that he's now the master of. He's proud of the place, but in a distant way, as though he's not fully convinced of its reality. He shows me the complex of sturdy wooden corrals and thoroughly scrubbed stables that he's still deciding whether to fill with actual horses: "Maybe we'll become the equestrian type." Me, I can't quite see it. He doesn't strike me as having the disposition of the classic horseman, the sort of person who garners deep satisfaction in mane detangling, feed-bag emptying, saddle adjusting and circular trotting. Then again, he's reinvented himself before.


At the edge of the yard that overlooks the highway that runs along the coast, he finally hints at what the new house means to him, not as an impressive piece of real estate but as a marker of how his life has changed in ways that I have to imagine must sometimes strike him as majestically inexplicable. "That's where it really went south," he says, gazing at a stretch of road below us. "I used to drive by that place with a sense of distasteful, sour remorse. That's where I threw it all away because I was sick. And now I think, 'Oh, my God, me and the missus will be here until the grandkids attend our funerals. We'll

probably going to get arrested within 16 hours of face-fucking her? I'd met her the night before for dinner at a restaurant, she started choking on a fish bone, I had to fucking Heimlich her. I remember it as a glorious night, she said a music producer was spying on her – and I didn't care – she got mad that I was getting high, she was boundary-ridden.

"It's about noon. I'm feeling ready to go back home to Malibu. I had to be careful with the car, there's a firearm in it. I'm wrecked, I drive her back into town, she gets mad because I'm still doing what I always do. I leave her home, I guess still being spied on by the music producer. I feel fine. I get back in my car with the firearm. I just have to get home safe, and right when I get to that place back there, I gun it.

"I see this cop who'd pulled me over and given me a field sobriety test at least twice in the previous few months. He turns on his lights, pulls me over, and it was many felonies. Of course I was bailed out by my dealer's boyfriend, who brought the \$10,000 in small bills, tens and twenties, and I remember when I got back home, this guy who owned a retail store – his old partner, Gary, was the greatest-looking,

there I am, in my own kitchen, cooking up some rock – no Vicodin, no Valium, nothing to take the edge off, barely a trace of fucking Absolut Citron left in the fridge, and I just go, 'This is as good as it gets right now.' I just go 'Bam!', triumph of the spirit. And the next thing that happens, I'm in custody within two weeks for even stranger reasons, and the phone rings and it's the phenom's son and he goes, 'Hey, dude, do you have any more of that opium?' I, of course, told him it was opium. Never call it heroin, it's very taboo. But this stuff, this Mexican sludge, just grabbed you by the fucking heartstrings and tore me apart. All those years of snorting coke, and then I accidentally get involved in heroin after smoking crack for the first time. It finally tied my shoelaces together. Smoking dope and smoking coke, you are rendered defenseless. The only way out of that hopeless state is intervention."

Day Two, the Pacific Coast Highway in Malibu. That's how it ended. With Downey telling the truth – the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, compelled by no authority or oath but only by his own frenzied, wild appetite to go on enduring and evolving – about what happened before it (all of it) could finally begin. 



# CONFES- SIONS *of* **a** PARTY ANIMAL

BOURBON, BLOW JOBS AND THE  
BIGGEST LESBIAN PARTY ON EARTH:  
UP ALL NIGHT WITH KESHA

**BY AUSTIN SCAGGS**  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY THEO WENNER

"I've had a few adult  
beverages in my  
life," says Kesha.









**P**ALM SPRINGS AT EASTER, when the desert oasis plays host to the LPGA Tour's Dinah Shore tournament, has long been a major event on the lesbian calendar. On Good Friday, hundreds of nearly naked, drunk and dancing women flaunt their gay pride at a sun-baked Hilton Hotel pool, like a Howard Stern fantasy come to life. Ke\$ha, the 23-year-old pop starlet who skyrocketed to stardom with her global Number One single, "TiK ToK," and will headline a massive White Party at the nearby convention center, coolly surveys the scene. "I've kissed girls before," she says. "But my preference is a wiener."

Contributing editor AUSTIN SCAGGS interviewed Madonna for RS 1090.

That ability to come up with a provocative line has served Ke\$ha well recently. In January, her album, *Animal*, debuted at Number One, following two Top 10 singles, including her guest spot on Flo Rida's smash "Right Round." This spring, Ke\$ha made it to *SNL*, performed her second single, "Blah Blah Blah," on *American Idol* – and she's hitting the road this summer with Lilith Fair. "Her talent as a writer is kind of odd," says her producer, pop hitmaker Dr. Luke. "She has fundamental talents, writing melodies and lyrics, but I'm amazed how much stuff she says ends up embedded in peoples' lives."

Depending on your brain chemistry, *Animal*'s electro beats, rave-y synths, vocoders and deadpan rapping hit you as propulsively catchy or repulsively moronic. On "TiK ToK" she sing-raps about

"feeling like P. Diddy" and brushing her teeth "with a bottle of Jack." It's of a theme with the rest of *Animal*, which documents a four-year period of highs and lows – Ke\$ha describes it as a "lost weekend" – that began when the singer was summoned to L.A. from Nashville in 2006 by Dr. Luke. The disc kicks off with the lyric "Maybe I need some rehab," and by the end, she's engaged in "dirty free-for-alls," taking her clothes off at a tranny bar and calling out her ex for acting like a bitch. On one song, "Party at Rich Dude's House," Ke\$ha recounts true stories of vomiting in Paris Hilton's closet, peeing in a bottle of Dom Perignon and extinguishing a cigar in a caviar tin. "I've had a few adult beverages in my life – I think the cat's out of the bag on that one," says Ke\$ha, who likes her Maker's Mark

STYLING BY MARIAN MALAKPOUR AT MARGARET MALDONADO AGENCY. HAIR BY RAMSELL MARTINEZ USING BUMBLE & BUMBLE. MAKEUP BY SARAI FISZEL FOR MAC AT THE MAGNET AGENCY. PREVIOUS SPREAD: BATHING SUIT BY ROSA CHA, SUEDÉ CAPE BY ALSEA AT CÉCILE. GLOVES BY ANDREA GUTTEREZ, RING BY MARCOS, BOTH AVAILABLE AT CHURCH BOUTIQUE. THIS PAGE: WIG VEST BY MARCO MARCO, TANK TOP BY RAQUEL ALLEGRA, SHOES BY SAM EDELMAN, SHORTS BY LOHAVETE, RING BY ALKEMIE, BOTH AVAILABLE AT CHURCH BOUTIQUE.



Poolside at Ruby  
Montaña's Coral Sands  
Inn in Palm Springs



neat. "It's very irreverent, unapologetic and honest. But it's also very tongue-in-cheek."

The afternoon before her Palm Springs show, Ke\$ha heads to Indian Canyons, a stunning desert oasis of crystal-clear streams and palm trees. "I need to go on a walk every day, like a dog," she says. Ke\$ha is tall – nearly six feet – and a tad tomboyish, cute without makeup. She has a tattoo on her foot that reads YEAH! and recently, in Switzerland, got a diamond implanted in her front tooth. Her attire this afternoon is secondhand: cut-off black jeans, T-shirt featuring a photo of Dylan circa '66, her favorite black cowboy boots with gaping holes in their soles. Searching for a place to sit, she casually wades through a stream. She burps, swears, talks about blow jobs, and, when she needs to take a leak, ducks

behind a tree. "I'm pretty sure in my past life I was a dude, because I talk like a dude and act like a dude," she says. "My mom always taught me to be tough."

Sitting on a boulder by the side of a trail, she's psyched when a snake slithers by, exclaiming, "Cute!" In March, on a promo trip to Australia, she cuddled with a spiny anteater and swam with sharks. Over Christmas break, on an off-the-grid trip to the jungles south of Tulum, Mexico, she snuck into Mayan ruins in the middle of the night. "I like to go to the jungle at least once a year, get away from human beings and not use my people voice, just my animal voice," she says. "I know it sounds crazy, but I like connecting with the Earth on a real level."

Ke\$ha considers her mother, Pebe, her best friend – they talk on the phone several times a day. "She's the original badass," says Ke\$ha (born Kesha Rose Sebert). Her earliest childhood memories are of sitting sidestage in an empty guitar case, watching Pebe, a promising Cyndi Lauper-style singer-songwriter, perform in clubs around Los Angeles. Pebe's parenting style was unconventional. "We'd go through a hole in the fence at Universal Studios," Ke\$ha recalls. "We'd sneak in and go diving in the fountain for quarters." She'd also dumpster-dive in Beverly Hills with her mother and godparents ("Mindy and Steve, who has one eyeball"), who polished up their bounty and resold it. After their treasure hunts, they'd ride the glass elevators at the Bonaventure hotel, with panoramic views of L.A. At a Target store, when Ke\$ha fell in

instantly feel OK," she says. "His music tells me to do what I do, to be myself and not pay attention to the other bullshit." Generally, she respects artists who are down-to-earth and unpretentious. "Like Ringo," she says. "I met him at the Grammys, and he congratulated me on my album! I threw up in my mouth a little bit. I said, 'Congratulations on being a fuckin' Beatle!'"

**T**O THIS DAY, KE\$HA DOES not know who her father is. "My mom was into astrology and wanted me to be a Pisces, and she went through the necessary ways of having a child," she says. "And she didn't want a man telling her what and what not to do. I always kind of wondered – my mom talked about guys named Pat the Rat, or this guy Bob, or John. She just wanted a baby. It's an interesting topic of conversation to other people more so than it is to myself. I don't obsess about it. Maybe I'm in denial. Maybe I need a therapist. But I had a very complete childhood. I don't feel like I missed out on anything."

Months shy from graduating with honors, she quit Brentwood High School in Nashville and moved to L.A. after Dr. Luke heard a rough demo she'd cut. "It was mostly acoustic-guitar-driven country stuff, but from her singing voice alone, I wanted to work with her," he says. "Her voice popped out, and then she started rapping about being a white girl from Tennessee. Her personality was already there. And she was pretty."

**"I'M PRETTY SURE IN MY PAST LIFE I WAS A DUDE," SAYS KE\$HA, "BECAUSE I TALK LIKE A DUDE AND ACT LIKE A DUDE."**

love with a stuffed cat that was out of their price range, Pebe instructed, "If you want something in life, you have to *take* it!"

Pebe's song "Old Flames Can't Hold a Candle to You" was a hit for Dolly Parton in 1980. A decade later, she relocated the clan – which also included Ke\$ha's half-brother, Lagan, who now writes about politics for the Huffington Post Investigative Fund – to Nashville. Ke\$ha grew up listening to Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard and Nineties pop country like Shania Twain and LeAnn Rimes. She yodeled around the house and played trumpet and sax in her middle-school band. She sat in on her mother's writing sessions and was soon penning autobiographical country music of her own. Her favorite album of all time is Dylan's *Nashville Skyline*. "I can put that on no matter where I am in the world and

When she moved to L.A., she lived for a while with a man her mother had dated around the time of her birth. "About when I got the call from Dr. Luke, I got a call from this guy saying, 'Hey, I think I'm your birth father.' I said, 'Mom, is this legit?' and she said, 'Maybe.'" By the time they got to his house, it was obvious to her that they were not related. "You know how I knew?" she asks. "You know those video-game chairs like the guy has in *40 Year Old Virgin*? He so had one of those. I was like, 'There was no way that half of my DNA is made up of a guy who has a video-game chair and plays in it all the time.'" She didn't bother to get a DNA test. "I operate on instinct," she says.

For a while, she lived in her late grandpa's Lincoln Continental, though she doesn't play it up for sym- [Cont. on 76]





CLOSE-UP

# Eugene Hütz: Rock & Roll Nomad

**W**HEN EUGENE HÜTZ – THE FRONTMAN FOR pan-ethnic gypsy-punk band Gogol Bordello – first moved to New York in 1998, he settled in the East Village, one of the few places in the world where the Ukrainian singer could find both grimy punk-rock clubs and a decent bowl of borscht. One of his regular haunts was the Russian & Turkish Baths, a no-frill *schvitz* where husky women still beat their clientele with oak leaves. Hütz, 37, would come here to detox after Gogol Bordello shows. “It’s where we used to have our after-after-afterparties,” he says. “I like the beat-up vibe – and it’s not a rip-off, like the rest of New York.”

Hütz lived in the Village for nearly a decade – it’s where he formed Gogol Bordello with a bunch of other expats in 1999. But now the singer’s heart belongs to another place: Rio de Janeiro, where he moved in 2008, partly at the recommendation of his buddy (and world-music star) Manu Chao. In Brazil, Hütz found the spontaneity that was missing from his life in New York. “Brazil is so liberating because all the windows are open and screaming with music,” says a typically animated Hütz, who retains a thick Eastern European accent. “It’s a crazy country – you go to the *favelas* at two in the morning, and tons of people are outside, practicing their samba dancing.” Hütz threw himself into Brazilian culture by staging what he calls “raids,” grabbing his battered acoustic guitar and playing at universities, in cafes and on the streets. “To the locals, I am the Russian guy who will show up and make your party go askew,” he says.

The singer’s adopted home figures largely on Gogol Bordello’s new album, the Rick Rubin-produced *Trans-Continental Hustle*, which adds samba-style grooves into the band’s usual Balkan-punk mishmash. Hütz is adapting to life in Rio smoothly – street kids have been giving him *favela* tours, he’s hung out with Madonna at Carnival (she’s a big Gogol fan), and he’s working on a Portuguese-language album (Hütz already speaks English, Ukrainian, Russian and some Italian) with local musicians.

Hütz calls himself a “wanderlust king” – he grew up in Kiev, then, following the Chernobyl nuclear disaster in 1986, made his way through Hungary, Austria and Italy, supporting himself partly by becoming a skilled shoplifter. So as he eventually tired of New York – “It’s all institutionalized nightlife, and there are too many cops,” he says – Hütz knows he will one day move on from Rio. “In Brazil, every club is an after-hours club,” he says. “But who knows? Maybe I’ll write the next album in Turkey.”

CHRISTIAN HOARD

PHOTOGRAPH BY ETHAN HILL

Hütz gets massaged with a broom made of oak leaves – called a *platza* – at the Russian & Turkish Baths in New York’s East Village.







# THE AIRPLANE THIEF

A stylized illustration of a propeller plane with a white body and red and black stripes, flying over a dark, dense forest. The plane is angled upwards, and its propeller is in motion. The background is a dark, moody sky with some clouds.

Colton Harris-Moore was a troubled teen on the run from the law. He had never set foot in a plane. But when he stole his first Cessna, he became an outlaw legend

BY JASON KERSTEN

ILLUSTRATION BY TOMER HANUKA

**H**E HAD TALKED ABOUT IT PLENTY, dreamed about it even more and, during the endless days he spent holed up alone in the empty vacation homes of the strangers he robbed, he had learned everything he could about flying planes. He had studied flight manuals, taken online quizzes about flight procedures under false names, and logged hours on simulator programs he found on the Internet. He had even created a MySpace page listing his profession as pilot, but the lie was toneless and unsatisfying, a place marker for an act unfulfilled.

The reality of his life was far more grim. He grew up without a father. His mother drank too much. At 17, he was a fugitive from the boys' home he had run away from a few months earlier, wanted in a string of more than 100 burglaries and other felonies. Now, it seemed, there was literally nowhere to go but up. He was finally going to show them who he really was, all the classmates and cops who had treated him like shit, told him he was worthless. *I'm going to steal an airplane*, he decided. *No more waiting.*

He knew just the place: Orcas Island Airport, a lonely landing strip on the Puget Sound some 80 miles from Seattle: surrounded by the towering green woods of the Pacific Northwest, no security, quiet as a graveyard at night. The aircraft, most of them single-engine prop planes used as island hoppers, were lined up on the tarmac like a row of shiny, expensive toys. That's where police suspect that Colton Harris-Moore was camped out on November 11th, 2008, hiding among the trees, watching and waiting for the right plane.

Toward late afternoon, a Cessna 182 buzzed in from the south. As a kid, Colton had a poster of a small plane's instrument panel on the wall of his room, and he'd spent hours staring up at the constellation of gauges and switches, marveling at their intricacy and the almost limitless possibilities of purpose and control. Now, as he watched the pilot land and taxi to a hangar on the airport's east side, it was easy to picture himself in the cock-









## On the Run

A teenage outlaw, Colton Harris-Moore embarked on a crime wave on Camano Island, near Seattle. (1) A self-portrait that police recovered from a stolen Mercedes led them to suspect that Colton was living in the woods like a “feral child.” (2) After Colton was accused of stealing planes, fans began selling merchandise emblazoned with his image. (3) Police say Colton crashed the third plane he stole in a clear-cut field at a suicidal 130 mph, then rubbed oil over the interior to eliminate his prints.



pit, to see himself guiding it down the runway, then climbing up and out of a life that had been claustrophobic with disappointment, poverty and uncertainty. He had never set foot in a plane before. He didn't mean to turn himself into a folk hero, a winged outlaw with thousands of fans who cheered his every move. But he was about to become the most legendary airplane thief in the history of aviation.

**T**HE SHORTEST DISTANCE TO Far Away,” proclaims the official slogan of Camano and Whidbey islands, which nest together like a pair of crescents at the north end of Puget Sound. Camano’s south end features some of the most coveted getaway real estate in the Pacific Northwest. For well-heeled Seattleites, it’s like the Hamptons for New Yorkers or Cape Cod for Bostonians. Million-dollar beachfront homes abound, and each summer the local

JASON KERSTEN wrote about the world’s greatest counterfeiter in *RS* 979.

population of 18,000 swells by nearly half, as doctors and dot-com executives from Seattle come to sit on the decks of their cabins at sunset and watch bald eagles wheel and dive into the waters of Tulalip Bay and Possession Sound.

Colton Harris-Moore – or Colt, as everyone called him – grew up only six miles from the southern tip of the island, but it might as well have been another planet. He was raised in a decaying mobile home on a five-acre patch in Camano’s rural central woods. His father, Gordon “Gordy” Moore, was a journeyman concrete finisher; his mother, Pam, was a once-divorced city girl from the Seattle suburb of Lynnwood. She had bought the land with money she’d saved from working as an accountant for the National Park Service. Their dream was to build a house on the property, but Gordy kept getting in trouble with the law, busted more than two dozen times for drunk driving and other offenses. He abandoned the family before Colton was two, leaving his son with a single, mostly unemployed mom in her early 40s who drank too much herself.

In spite of the conditions, little Colt was a happy kid. He put on so much weight that Pam nicknamed him Tubby – almost as if his body knew he’d one day explode into a six-foot-five, 200-pound teenager. When he was four, Pam met and married Bill Kohler, a gentle, heavyset man who had once served in the Army and worked as a milker at a nearby dairy. The family kept chickens out back, and when Colt and Bill walked out to feed them, Bill would pretend he was a chicken, jerking his head and strutting. Colt adored him, but Bill turned out to be almost as unreliable as his father had been – an on-and-off junkie whom Pam threw out of the house when he was using.

Most of the time it was just Colt and his mom. He collected James Bond movies, watching them over and over. He loved animals, taking care of a blind duck that wandered onto the property, and playing with his dog, a Great Pyrenees named Cody. But he devoted most of his time to exploring an obsession he’d had since he was a toddler: airplanes. A love of planes is not unusual among boys, but where most



move on to sports and girls, Colt got only more and more entranced with the intricacies of aviation, filling the pages of sketch pads with meticulously drawn aircraft. In the margins he listed detailed technical specifications that would have impressed a flight engineer: "*Dassault Falcon 2000EX - France, Max speed - 603mph, Range - 3,800 nm, Power Plant - two garrett ATF 4-7A-4C turbofans.*" At the top of each image he included a pedigree: "*my own free hand.*" When a plane passed overhead, he could look up and tell you what company made it, the type of engine, how many passengers it held. "He was looking up at a plane every time I went outside," Pam recalls. "I got tired of looking at planes."

Before the crime spree that made him a legend, Colt had never actually been in a plane. But right across the water was Whidbey Island, home to a naval air station, and A-6E Intruders and EA-6B Prowlers tore through the skies above him on a regular basis. The Blue Angels were a top attraction at the base's annual air show, and just 15 miles east was the main Boeing plant in Everett, the largest airplane factory in the world. "He had this book of all the Boeing airplanes that they had made, and he always told me he wanted to become a pilot," says Jessica Wesson, a childhood friend of Colt's since the second grade. "He even told me that his dad was a pilot. I'm pretty sure he was lying about that, though."

Colt was determined to become a pilot himself, but social gravity seemed to have other plans for him. On his eighth birthday, his mother bought him a \$300 bike. A sheriff's deputy, unable to believe that a poor kid who lived in a mobile home could have such an expensive toy, accused him of stealing it and escorted him home in the back of his cruiser, embarrassing Colt in front of his mother. When Colt was eight or nine, his dog was run over and killed by the wife of a local cop. The worst blow came a year later, when his stepfather, Bill, was found dead in an Oklahoma motel room of a likely drug overdose. In a rage, Pam smashed every piece of glass in the house. "I went insane," she recalls. She hit the bottle hard after that, sometimes sinking into two-week binges in which she failed to stock the house with enough food.

Colt became depressed, unable to fall asleep until three in the morning, then waking up the next day feeling groggy and irritable. "I am not happy," he confided to a social worker at the time. "I could stay in bed all day. I need help. I am tired of this stuff." He felt trapped in his own home, at the mercy of his mother's addiction. He wanted her to quit drinking and go back to work, to provide him with what other kids had: cellphones, nice shoes, stability. He fought to project normality by keeping his hair short and his clothes clean, but he had trouble relating to other kids at school, eating by himself and rarely talking. When he did speak up, his mouth got him in trouble:

In the sixth grade, he picked a fight with two kids who beat him up, and he teased another student so mercilessly that the kid began to choke him. "The older we got, the better Colton got at getting into trouble and getting out of it," recalls Wesson. "He was very sly and a good liar. I remember when he would get in trouble he always had this smirk on his face that said, 'You have no idea who you're dealing with.'"

One day when he was 12, Colt saw a cellphone sitting in an empty delivery truck in the nearby town of Stanwood. He had always wanted a phone, so he took it. After he made a few calls with it, the cops quickly tracked him down. More theft cases followed, mostly kid stuff, but it was enough to draw the attention of the authorities, who routed him into the system. A psychiatrist Pam consulted put Colt on Strattera, a failed antidepressant that was repackaged as a medication for kids with attention-deficit disorder. He began sleeping better, but Pam, claiming the drug made him depressed and moody, never renewed the prescription.

The two of them fought constantly. "He was like the Tasmanian Devil," Pam says. Social workers who visited the home reported that Colt experienced "constant meltdowns pretty much every day." Once, when he was 12, his mother pressed assault charges against him. During one epic battle, Colt later recounted, Pam screamed, "I wish you would die!" Although she denies she has a drinking problem, a report by mental-health experts put the blame squarely on her: "This conflict seems largely due to mom's drinking of alcohol." Social workers recommended that Pam put Colt in counseling and seek treatment for her alcoholism, but she refused both. In a case file that petered out with no resolution, a social worker would write, "Parent states her drinking helps her deal with Colton and helps her stand up to him."

Colt tried to encourage her. He presented her with an AA handbook, but

**COLTON AND HIS MOTHER BATTLED CONSTANTLY. DURING ONE EXPLOSIVE FIGHT SHE SCREAMED, "I WISH YOU WOULD DIE!"**

she burned it. Seething at the destruction that drugs and alcohol had wrought on his family, he resolved he would never do either. It would become his single greatest point of pride, a way to set himself apart from the adults who had failed him.

Stealing was another matter. He fell into a routine of petty theft - the cash box from the local public library, sodas from the teachers lounge at school, even two small boats. All he needed to take his criminal record to the next level was a mentor, who came along soon enough.

**W**HEN HE WAS 14, Colt made friends with a boy whose name sounded like something straight out of the annals of Wild West sidekicks: Harley Davidson Ironwing. Like Colt, Harley was fatherless. He'd lost his dad, an avid biker, to leukemia when Harley was four, leaving him with a mother he considered a junkie. The state placed him with a Native American foster family, and he adopted their last name. By the time he met Colt, at age 16, he was already supporting himself as a burglar, knocking over homes in and around Stanwood.

A blond, curly-haired kid with a hobbit's build, Harley was a foot shorter than Colton, but the younger boy looked up to him. "Colt wanted to be like I am, have a reputation where nobody messed with him," says Ironwing, who just finished serving two years for burglary at Airway Heights Corrections Center, near Spokane. "He'd been bullied, and I don't like bullies. I took him under my wing."

To Colt, Harley was living life on his own terms, free from parental supervision, taking what he needed to get by without hurting anyone. "He knew I wouldn't go into a house if somebody's home," says Harley. "I'm not trying to get hit with kidnapping or anything like that." Colt realized that the key to winning the older boy's trust - and the material trappings he wanted - were right in his backyard: the vacation homes on Camano's south end. So he hid in the woods, staked out a vacant spread, then called Harley for help.

"You give me \$300 upfront, and I keep whatever I find," Harley told him - and that was how the longest-running burglary spree in the island's history began. Ironwing taught him how to slip through the forests between homes, pick locks and stay invisible to neighbors. Soon the two friends were pulling off jobs every few weeks, stealing jewelry, cellphones, iPods, credit cards, laptops, a telescope, TVs and food. They'd often steal a car to ferry the goods, but after "borrowing" it, they'd fill it up with gas, drive it back to where they found it and wipe away the prints.

Just being inside the houses was a rush for Colton. They were clean and well-stocked with all the semblances of the



normal, prosperous life he'd never had. If he was confident the owners were away, he'd kick off his shoes, pour himself a juice from the fridge and watch TV. Colton enjoyed it so much that soon he was logging on to peoples' computers and going online to learn new skills as a criminal. He taught himself how to rig a stolen credit card to a homemade reader, pull its PIN number and draw cash off it from an ATM. Later he began using the cards to shop online for commercial credit-card readers and specially crafted "bump" keys, capable of opening common household locks.

The computers and the Internet also allowed him to explore his deeper obsession. "He talked about stealing a plane," says Ironwing. An even better plan, the friends agreed, would be to steal a helicopter, which they could use to rob a Costco. "Me and him talked about landing it on the roof," says Ironwing. "There's a lot of things you can get at Costco."

For all their big talk, the two friends seemed more like teenagers playing at being crooks. They rarely left messes at the houses they robbed, careful to clean up after themselves, and Colton didn't even sell most of the goods he stole, hoarding them in a tent on his mother's property. That proved to be a mistake. One day in September 2006, police arrived at Pam's house to serve a warrant for Colton, who had missed a court date on charges that he bought \$3,700 worth of computer equipment with a stolen credit card. Discovering the cache of stolen goods, they linked Colton to the string of burglaries.

Rather than get locked up for the credit-card charges, Colton decided to go on the lam. It was the beginning of his life as a fugitive: Aside from a stint in juvenile detention, he would spend the next four years on the run. Some speculated that he was living in the woods like an old-time outlaw, but Ironwing scoffs at the idea. "He had a place to stay," he says, but refuses to elaborate. What seems clear is that Colton supported himself by robbing homes and stores: Police suspect his haul may total as much as \$1.5 million. Angered by the thefts, residents began to clamor for the cops to do something. "At one point I hated my house, which is really quite beautiful," one of the victims wrote to a judge. Another claimed that her "ability to live comfortable and safe within my own house was shattered. I didn't get a good night's sleep for weeks."

Mark Brown, the sheriff of Island County, printed up "Wanted" posters of Colton and Harley, and vowed to the media that he would capture them – an act he now says he almost regrets. "I did it to catch him," Brown says. "But the thing I agonize about is that I brought him to the media's attention in the first place."

The chase was on. To Colton, the challenge was personal, a continuation of the conflict with Camano cops that went all the way back to the bike incident when he

was eight. Deputies further stoked his ire when they temporarily confiscated his new dog, a beagle mix named Melanie, that they found tied up next to his cache of stolen goods. "Cops wanna play huh!?" Colton wrote in a note to his mom. "Well it's no lil game. . . . It's war! & tell them that."

Deputies came close to arresting Colton twice, when they caught him in the midst of a burglary, but both times he simply outran them, disappearing into the woods. Then, in February 2007, Sheriff Brown's campaign paid off when neighbors noticed a light on in a summer home and called the police. His men surrounded the residence and shouted out Colton's name. Terrified, he phoned his mom. She drove to the house, stood outside and talked to him for close to an hour by cellphone, finally persuading him to surrender.

Colton, then 16, pleaded guilty to three counts of burglary and was shipped off to Green Hill School, a maximum-security facility for juvenile offenders. After a psychologist determined that he was at heart a good, intelligent kid who didn't do drugs, he was sent to Griffin Home, a minimum-security group residence in the Seattle suburb of Renton. With only about 30 residents, the quiet, low-key setting made it feel more like a summer camp than a detention facility. He would be confined to Griffin for three to four years, depending on how quickly he straightened up his act.

Colton found the home stultifying. The fluorescent lights burned his eyes, and the counselors forced him to take a class on drug and alcohol abuse, lumping him in with the dopers and tweakers. For him, it was the ultimate humiliation, and he began teasing other boys during therapy sessions, playing the clown. But his wiseass routine failed to win him friends, and he felt isolated, misunderstood. "I wish I was home," he wrote on an elaborately designed card he sent to his mother, "but since I'm not, this is the best I can do. I hope you like it." He drew a sylvan scene evoking the best

of home: a butterfly, a chicken, flowers, fir trees and a flaming barbecue.

Art was one of the only classes he enjoyed at Griffin. One collage he created, on the theme of what he wanted out of life, displays the crisp, orderly focus of someone who knows exactly what he wants to accomplish. It consists of 106 images, most of which are text, in a precise and careful arrangement. The word "money" appears four times, along with "wealth" and "dollars" and a dozen designer labels, from DKNY to Hugo Boss. Most of the images are high-end gadgets – Rolex watches, cellphones, PDAs – but there is also a strawberry cheesecake, and tourism logos from Mexico and Argentina. At the top of the collage, dead center, is a passenger jet, framed by prophetic words: "May I have another" and "Profession: Pilot."

But the life he wanted would never come to him as long as he was confined to Griffin Home. The place had no fence, and from his bunkhouse, the freeway leading back to Camano was only a thousand feet away. At 8:40 p.m. on April 29th, 2008, Colton waited until the first bed check of the evening was complete, then slipped out of his bunk and into the night.

**T**HERE WAS NO TURNING back for Colton once he left Griffin Home. He had violated the terms of his sentence, which would only add to the time he would be locked up. If they were going to catch him again, he decided, they would have to do it while he was pursuing his dream. He knew he wasn't going to win his wings by conventional routes: the military, college, flight school. He'd have to train himself, which would take time and resources.

What he did after fleeing Griffin can't be confirmed, but police suspect he resorted to his old habits. Two weeks after escaping from the home, they say, Colton was back on Camano, hitting the weekend homes hard. He applied for credit cards with info stolen from burglary victims, and had one sent to him at a mailbox he installed by his mother's property. (While he was at it, his mother insisted on cooking him a big breakfast – hash browns and eggs and sausage and bacon. Then he took off so she wouldn't get in trouble for harboring him.) He allegedly used the stolen cards to withdraw \$300 in cash, and he went online and ordered card scanners and two iPods. He managed to stay off the police's radar for three months, until a deputy spotted him driving a stolen Mercedes. When the deputy gave chase, Colton jumped from the car and escaped into the woods.

Colton was clearly enjoying himself: Police recovered a backpack from the Mercedes containing a digital camera with photos he had taken of himself. In one, he's lying on his back among the trees and ferns, wearing a Mercedes polo shirt and

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1



## Fight or Flight

Colton grew up in a broken home, where he fought with his mother and was picked on at school. From a young age he became obsessed with animals and flying. (1) With his dog, Melanie. "He confided in his animals, because they would listen to him," says a friend. (2) An elaborate collage that Colton created illustrates the central goals of his life: big money, fancy gadgets and airplanes. Above the aircraft are the words "Profession: Pilot." (3) A sketch he made of a plane, accompanied by precise technical specifications. As a boy, he could cite details of any plane passing overhead.

went out to look for him or the wreckage," reads the account. "When he was sighted on his way back, they rushed fire apparatus to the landing field, expecting him to crash. But he made a safe landing, even if it was obviously inexperienced." More recently, in March of last year, a Texan named Joshua Paul Calhoun commandeered a Bonanza 836 from a municipal airport and crashed it in a stand of trees five miles after taking off, walking away with only minor injuries. Later, in a jailhouse interview, Calhoun explained his motivation to a reporter in terms that Colton could relate to: a life-long fascination with flying.

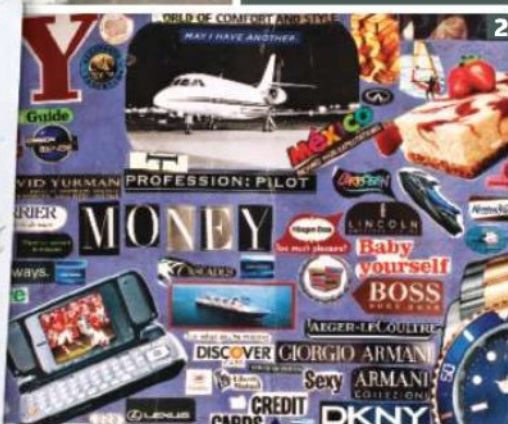
Once Colton reached the hangar at Orcas Island Airport on the night of November 11th, his burglary experience came in handy. The door was locked, but he had no trouble forcing it open. There in front of him was the Cessna 182 that police say he had scoped out earlier that day. He rummaged around the hangar until he found a key to the Cessna, then climbed into the cockpit.

Colton browsed the manual, which owners are required to keep in the plane. Then, at first light, he switched both fuel tanks to the "on" position, pushed the mixture-control rod to "full-in" so that plenty of fuel would reach the engine, and flipped on the fuel pump to prime the aircraft. Moments later, after turning the key and pushing in the throttle, he found himself racing down the runway at 80 miles per hour, with nothing but the cold, unwelcoming waters of Puget Sound beyond. As the Cessna's nose wheel tipped off the tarmac, he pulled back on the yoke, and the plane popped gently off the earth.

After nearly 18 years of dreaming, he was flying.

Whether or not Colton had a destination in mind is known only to him, but his options were surprisingly limited. Unless he wanted to draw attention by crossing into Canadian airspace, his best bet was to stay far enough east, which is precisely what he did. He banked southeast, toward the Cascades. Heavy rain was pounding the mountains that morning, but to avoid the weather all he had to do was climb to 10,000 feet. There, he could soar between blue sky and a cottony sea of white, with Mount Rainier peaking through the clouds to his right like a sugar castle. Except for the occasional glint and contrail of an airliner, it was a world completely unmarred by humans, a bright, serene dreamscape that felt like it belonged entirely to him.

"In soloing – as in other activities – it is far easier to start something than it is to finish it," Amelia Earhart once said. She was referring to the art of safely landing an aircraft, a task that Colton faced three and a half hours after takeoff. He couldn't put down in a small airport without drawing the attention of authorities, so his only choice was an open, level field. He found one just on the east side of the Cascades,



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Simulator or X-Plane, fire them up on a stolen laptop or desktop and practice for hours. Both programs offered dozens of planes to choose from, with realistic terrain and cockpit displays, weather settings and thousands of airports. By early November, seven months after leaving Griffin Home, his secondhand knowledge had reached its limit. He needed to fly solo, and the only way to do it was to steal a plane.

Airplane theft is a rare crime. In 2009, only seven airplanes were stolen in the United States; the suspects are almost invariably members of drug cartels, who use the planes to transport their products. Almost unheard of are thieves like Colton, who take to the sky with no practical experience and no greater motivation than to simply be airborne. An article in a 1929 edition of *Popular Science* tells the tale of a British mechanic who, responding to a dare, took off in a bomber. "He was gone for four hours and Royal Air Force planes

smirking as he listens to one of his stolen iPods. The photo would become the iconic image of Colton, emblematic of his outlaw mystique: a cocky, resourceful thief, comfortable on the lam, doing his own thing.

Based on the photo, it was easy to assume that Colton was a survivalist, living in the forests of the Pacific Northwest like a boy Rambo or a "feral child," as one Camano detective called him. To track him down, the police sent out dog teams and helicopters equipped with infrared radar, but they never found a trace. That's because Colton was most likely staying in vacant homes or with friends: He wanted to fly, and he needed to be close to the Internet to prepare himself. He could download training programs like *Microsoft Flight*



on the high plains of the Yakama Indian Reservation. He circled around, lined up for an approach and reduced speed, entering into a controlled fall that he had to precisely time and align. Bearing in to the field at more than 80 miles per hour, he was attempting a feat that had gotten pilots with far more experience killed.

Tribal police from the Yakama Reservation found the Cessna later that day. Its landing gear and propeller were mangled, its undercarriage crumpled. Where Colton disappeared to was anyone's guess. He was miles from the nearest town and 250 miles from home. The only trace he left behind was dried vomit in the cockpit. Whether it was brought on by airsickness or fear, it was a small price to pay. Flying had been everything Colton had imagined it would be – and better. He wanted more.

**I**T WOULD TAKE ALMOST A YEAR for the authorities to accuse Colton of the Cessna theft. By then, he had already gained notoriety as the “Barefoot Burglar” – an alias bestowed on him after a security camera captured him stalking through a store he had allegedly robbed, sans shoes and socks. It was part of a frenetic string of suspected burglaries last summer, which not only included more homes but a boat, a bank, five stores, a rifle from a police cruiser, and another plane. According to the local sheriff, Colton stole his second aircraft, a Cirrus SR22, from the airport in a sleepy town called Friday Harbor, on September 11th of last year. He flew it only about 10 miles, back to the airport on Orcas Island where he had stolen his first plane – but what's remarkable is that he did it at night.

Night flying requires far more focus than daylight flight. Unless there's a good moon, physical reference comes down almost exclusively to points of light. The FAA requires pilots to be “instrument rated” to fly in low visibility, an entirely different license that means you can go from takeoff to landing based on the readings from your instrument panel alone. John F. Kennedy Jr., who was not instrument rated, died along with his wife and sister-in-law while attempting to fly on a hazy night. Colton came close to nailing it on his first try.

“He broke one of my \$300 runway lights,” Beatrice von Tobel, the airport manager at Orcas, says with a laugh. “But the plane was actually still flyable.”

The next night, a deputy spotted the fugitive in the town of Eastsound and gave chase. Colton easily outran the cop, laughing as he disappeared into the woods. The deputy said that Colton had “vaporized.”

He was on a tear, suspected of linking together crimes so quickly and unexpectedly that the police could do little more than tabulate the toll. After outrunning the deputy, he worked his way to a nearby marina, where he stole a small yacht and navigated 15 miles north to the town

of Point Roberts, right on the Canadian border. Based on subsequent burglaries there, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police believe that Colton crossed into Canada, then made his way to the British Columbia town of Creston, where he broke into two airplane hangars at the local airstrip. Unable to find a plane to his liking, he seems to have crossed back into the U.S. on foot, stolen a car, and driven it straight to another small airport in Bonners Ferry, Idaho. There, on September 29th, he is suspected of stealing the plane that would make him famous.

This time he took a Cessna 182 belonging to a local cattle rancher who used it to fly to auctions. “He broke open the passenger door with a crowbar or a screwdriver and got in the plane,” says the rancher, Pat Gardiner. “He must have spent time in there reading manuals, because they figured he got in the night before, stayed in there and then opened up the door at first light, pulled the plane out.”

Colton couldn't find any keys for the Cessna, but most single-engine planes are as simple to boost as a 1974 Pinto; he apparently started it up by jamming a screwdriver into the keyhole and twisting. An airport worker who saw the plane take off reported that its engine was “firewalled” – running at full bore – but even then Colton had trouble getting off the ground. Gardiner's Cessna was equipped with a variable propeller, which is kind of like a gearshift for propellers. He was taking off in low and barely cleared the tops of the trees.

After takeoff he turned southwest, following the Kootenai Valley to Spokane, then on to Walla Walla, where he swung northwest and crossed central Washington. He was heading home – but just after crossing the Cascades, his fuel reserves ran low. A few miles outside the town of Granite Falls, he dropped down beneath a thick cloud cover to search for a place to land. That's when he found himself in serious weather – and trouble.

## COLTON'S EXPLOITS MADE HIM A FOLK HERO: THE BOY WHO NO ONE HAD CARED ABOUT BEFORE NOW HAD FRIENDS EVERYWHERE.

Gardiner was stunned when he was briefed on an FAA reconstruction of the next few minutes, during which wind gusts in excess of 30 miles per hour tossed the small plane around like a toy. Colton nearly lost control of the aircraft. “He was going 90 degrees up and every which way,” Gardiner says. As he finally leveled off, Colton spotted a timber clear-cut and bore down for a landing. Eager to get out of the rough weather, he approached the stump-strewn clearing at a suicidal 110 knots – a good 40 miles per hour faster than it's safe to land. It was the equivalent of jumping a pickup off a hill at 130 miles per hour and trying to put it down safely in a field of fire hydrants.

Upon contact with the ground, the plane immediately began careening into tree stumps, which ripped away its wheels and buckled the undercarriage. “When he hit the ground there were only 90 feet of marks,” says Gardiner. “He had about a six- or seven-G stop.” In pilot parlance: He went from almost 130 miles per hour to a dead standstill in less than three seconds.

The air bags in Gardiner's plane deployed, probably saving Colton's life. Investigators later determined that Colton was so scared the airplane would explode that he kicked open the passenger-side door and ran from the crash still wearing his headphones. When no flames erupted, he returned and diligently rubbed a quart of oil over the interior, successfully eliminating his fingerprints.

A logger discovered Gardiner's plane two days later; three days after that a family in Granite Falls reported a burglary, and the local police quickly mobilized a search team. As they scoured the woods behind the house, one deputy reportedly heard a gunshot. “It was close, and they felt threatened,” a police spokeswoman later reported – but deputies found neither Colton nor proof that he had fired a weapon.

Harley Ironwing, who had turned himself in not long after Colton, saw the story on TV in prison and instantly recognized his friend. “I said, ‘That's my little partner,’” he says. “I was actually expecting him to steal a helicopter.” He has a firm opinion when it comes to the gunshot. “I know there's no way Colton fired that shot. Colt may be big, but he wouldn't hurt a fly. Everybody knows the hills around Granite Falls are filled with tweakers. It was probably somebody worried about their meth lab.”

**I**T WAS THE IDAHO PLANE THEFT, and a 26-year-old writer from Seattle named Zack Sestak, that turned Colton into a modern-day legend. Sestak had read about Colton back in September and decided to start a fan page on Facebook. “I read the article and thought, ‘Wow, this kid is nuts,’” he says. “I started it kind of as





### Life on the Lam

(1) Colton was caught on camera robbing a store on Orcas Island last September. (2) At a court appearance in 2007. (3) Harley Davidson Ironwing, Colton's mentor and partner in crime.

a joke. For the longest time there were like seven members." After an Associated Press article about the Idaho plane theft mentioned the fan page, Sestak was surprised to find that it had gained more than 1,000 members in less than a day.

"Fly, Colton, Fly!" "Colton is a true hero" and "You're a modern day Jesse James" were among the messages his fans wrote. Girls wanted to date him. Dozens offered to hide him from the police. A Seattle entrepreneur hawked Colton T-shirts emblazoned with his face and a slogan cribbed from the title of Merle Haggard's song: MOMMA TRIED. The boy whom hardly anyone had given a shit about when he needed help suddenly had friends everywhere.

"You got people reading headlines about billion-dollar bailouts and executives getting million-dollar bonuses with taxpayer dollars," Sestak says. "People feel disillusioned, and they see Colton wearing the hat of somebody who's taking on the system by himself, and it looks like he's winning. It captures the imagination."

Colt was baffled by the celebrity. He called his mom and read her the Facebook messages. They had some good laughs, especially over newspaper articles that portrayed him as a barefoot renegade living in the woods, stealing food for survival. "He doesn't live in the woods and he never has," Pam says. "He lives in a house, with a lady and a couple of guys. The woman is a

chef." She claims not to know the woman's name, but adds that Colton earns his keep by doing some sort of "computer work." The residence, she believes, is behind a gate and "heavily guarded." Colton drives a brand-new car, she boasts, and even goes out in public, albeit disguised. There are also rumors that he now has a girlfriend.

"The way I look at it is, he's living his life his way, and to hell with everybody else," she says. "I'm proud of that."

Since November, Pam has been under siege by reporters from as far away as Brazil. She insists on being paid for interviews, and is perplexed when they explain that they are only allowed to pay for photo rights. The ceiling in her kitchen is collapsing in on her, drooping insulation.

"I miss him," she says despondently. Colton rarely calls her anymore. These days her most regular visitors are cops. Once, after Colton's dog, Melanie, flushed a cop out of the trees behind her house, an entire SWAT team emerged from the forest, looking for Colton. Pam sleeps with a shotgun and has posted a plywood sign out front reading NOTICE: IF YOU GO PAST THIS SIGN, YOU WILL BE SHOT.

Hollywood also came calling, offering to buy the rights to Colton's story whenever he turns himself in or gets caught. Colton told his mother he wasn't interested, and that if he did make any money off his story, he'd give it all to an animal shelter. Pam says she tried to talk him

into turning himself in, maybe use the movie money to hire a good lawyer, but he wasn't interested. He was nervous that he wouldn't get a fair trial, that cops were so angry over his success that they'd shoot him on sight.

Mark Brown, the sheriff of Island County, expresses disgust over Colton's notoriety. To Colton's fans, Brown and the cops are country bumpkins who can't catch a 19-year-old kid operating on a criminal's worst tactical ground: islands. Yet among all the summer homes, Colton has found a perfect niche, a hole too big for the cash-strapped sheriff's offices to fill. "You could step into one of these cabins and live for months," Brown says. "It's seasonal – by the time anyone reports one of his burglaries, he's usually been gone for days, sometimes weeks." It appears that until Colton makes a mistake or gets unlucky, he'll continue to run the game.

Colton, for his part, apparently has a long-term plan. "He wants to start his own private airline, a very private airline," Pam says with a straight face. It may sound completely insane – how could a teenage kid, whose face is plastered all over the Internet, believe he could make a living by piloting stolen planes? – but drug runners and smugglers have done it practically since the invention of flight. An estimated 27,000 small planes take to the air in America each day, and as long as Colton keeps a low profile and masters his landings, he could theoretically reuse a stolen plane indefinitely. Many small airports sport unattended fuel pumps that accept credit cards, which would enable Colton to fly almost anywhere in the country. "If he's staying away from airports with commercial airliners, controllers really don't care what you're doing or who you are or where you're going," says Max Trescott, an award-winning FAA flight instructor. "It's like the Wild West in that regard. A small airplane is like a car. Does anyone pay attention to you when you drive down the street?" For as little as \$6 a day, Colton could park the plane at a small airport and no one would be the wiser. Although the FAA requires small airports to log the tail or "N" numbers of visiting planes, the numbers are never cross-checked.

The last time Colton called his mother, he mentioned that he was deep into his latest self-learning project: mastering a foreign language through Rosetta Stone. Pam refuses to say whether he is studying Spanish in preparation for a run to the border. Smuggling drugs may seem like a stretch for a kid who detests them, but Colton is legally no longer a kid, and if there's one thing as certain about adulthood as the law of lift behind an airplane's wing, it's that we learn to compromise our way to our dreams. Other than his dogs, flying has always been the only thing Colton can count on to make him forget his troubles. [Cont. on 73]



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# Reviews

NEW CDS ..... Pg. 66  
SINGLES ..... Pg. 67  
MOVIES ..... Pg. 72  
CHARTS ..... Pg. 82



Illustration by ROBERTO PARADA

**Revenge of the  
Springsteen  
nerds: Brooklyn  
bar band goes  
for broke**

## The Hold Steady

★★★★★

Heaven Is Whenever *Vagrant*

BY JON DOLAN



At a time when all the hipster bands are high-brow conceptualists, the Hold

Steady are keeping alive the tradition of the schlubby genius. The Brooklyn quartet make something mythic from a simple set of core values: sport drinking, mosh pits, power chords, sin, salvation, Springsteen. They look like a bunch of bar backs fronted by an IT guy on a bender, and they don't often stray beyond Seventies hard-rock guitar grind and beery Eighties college-rock romanticism. But only Bruce himself can compete with singer-guitarist Craig Finn's stories of normal, messed-up boys and girls jonesing for cheap release out in that great American noplacewhere Thunder Road runs into darkness on the edge of town.

On *Heaven Is Whenever*, the Hold Steady don't just show us how much they love classic rock — they make some of their own. It's their most polished record, nearly majestic at points, without scrimping on bloodshot angst or exuberance.

"The Weekenders" opens with shimmering guitars that are almost U2-like, before exploding into a big, drunken-sailors "whoa, whoa, whoa" chorus. It's got all of Finn's lyrical trademarks: a metal bar, a reservoir, a drug deal at an OTB and a soiree with a hostess who greets guests with lines like, "The theme of this party is the



industrial age, and you came in dressed like a train wreck." But Finn's hard-boiled romanticism has gained nuance and empathy; this isn't just gnarly, lowbrow noir, there's real dread in his Bruce-indebted moan as he watches the girl at the song's center get crushed by a good time. "Hurricane J" is equally pathos-ridden, a beleaguered pop-punk banger where Finn tells the titular trouble-girl heroine, "I see the crowd you're hanging with, and those kids don't seem positive," knowing his dad shtick won't work. On "Rock Problems," guitarist Tad Kubler overlays hot, slashing riffs with pretty serrations before lighting up a metal-messiah solo that would've shut down the Sunset Strip in 1986.

*Heaven* is more musically compact than the band's last album, 2008's *Stay Positive*: Keyboardist Franz Nicolay recently departed, taking with him piano tinklings that occasionally made the Hold Steady sound like the E Street Band if they spent the Eighties gigging at Cheers. Kubler fills all that space with anthemic splashiness – Bic-lighter sway on "Soft in the Center," Pixies-like inverted skank on "Barely Breathing," pile-driver noise that could fill a hockey rink on "Our Whole Lives."

Going too far off-menu doesn't work on the bluesy "The Sweet Part of the City" or the Bright Eyes folk rock of "A Slight Discomfort." But if the Hold Steady aren't always great musical explorers, they explore why they lose with grand, corny conviction. The most uncharacteristically expansive moment on the album is "We Can Get Together," a fragile acoustic rocker with soft keys and angelic backing vocals. Finn throws his best killer party, just him and an old friend sitting in her bedroom, listening to songs about heaven, including one by Heavenly – cute Nineties Brit punks light-years from the tough-guy squall the Hold Steady pay rent with. "I only had one single," Finn sings. "It was a song about a pure and simple love." For the Hold Steady, simplicity is all the paradise you need.

**Key Tracks:** "The Weekenders," "We Can Get Together"

# Jack White's Freaky Blues Sideline

**Beefier than the White Stripes, busier than the Raconteurs, Dead Weather find groove**

**The Dead Weather** ★★★★★<sup>1/2</sup>

*Sea of Cowards* Third Man

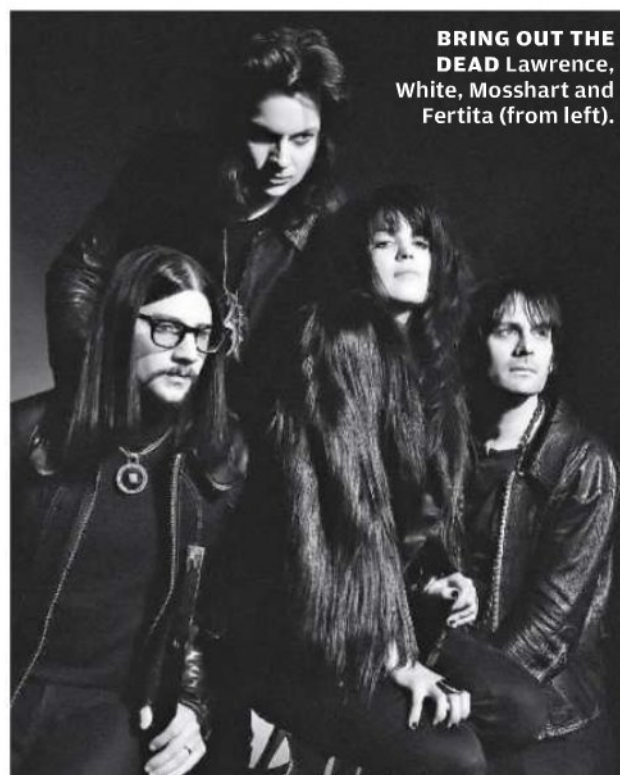


The second album by the Dead Weather, Jack White's current singing-drummer gig and gothic-blues holiday, is a rock of action – nothing but action. There is barely room to breathe, much less sing along, in these vicious twists and blitzkrieg segues. "Blue Blood Blues" is a furious pileup of Jack Lawrence's grunting fuzz bass, Dean Fertita's abrasive skidding guitar and bizarre doo-wop vocal pepper, pushed around by White's mule-kick outbursts at his kit. "I'm Mad" zigzags between fire-dance delirium and drunken-Godzilla stomp, with jolts of abused synthesizer and vocalist Alison Mosshart's she-devil vengeance. Technically, these 11 tracks are songs, with titles and hooks. The effect, though, is more like a precisely arranged parade of spasms, blasted at you in a kind of aural IMAX. Last year's *Horehound* had the same feral

air. But the moving parts on *Sea of Cowards* – the distortion on Fertita's guitar riffs in "Die by the Drop"; the clang of White's pie-plate-cymbal crashes in "Hustle and Cuss"; his and Mosshart's incantatory bursts and lost-soul harmonies – come faster, meaner and fatter. There are more single-worthy tunes on White's records with the Raconteurs; in the White Stripes, he prefers his blues with limits. But with this band, White lets himself go over the top. Don't be too cool to go along.

DAVID FRICKE

**Key Tracks:** "Blue Blood Blues," "Die by the Drop"



**BRING OUT THE DEAD** Lawrence, White, Mosshart and Fertita (from left).

## The National

★★★★<sup>1/2</sup>

*High Violet* 4AD

**Beautiful losers get even more beautiful on fifth album**



The National are rousing-rock sad sacks in a time-honored tradition: Joy Division, the Cure, Nick Cave. With their fifth set, perhaps the sad-sackiest yet, they embody their own era. Singer Matt Berninger's gorgeous baritone is still the band's main selling point: Listen to the moeey sexiness of "Bloodbuzz Ohio" as he describes undressing "at the foot of your love." Yet the tension comes mainly from composers Aaron and Bryce Dessner: The music is some of their lushest and darkest, especially the ghostly, droning "Afraid of Everyone." "All the very best of us/String ourselves up for love," Berninger repeats near the set's end, a lusty bar-room singalong for all us lonely people. Where do we all come from?

WILL HERMES

**Key Tracks:** "Bloodbuzz Ohio," "Vanderlyle Crybaby Geeks"

## Court Yard Hounds

★★★★ *Columbia*

**Two Dixie Chicks break out sweet harmonies**



Court Yard Hounds are sisters Emily Robison and Martie Maguire – two-thirds of the Dixie Chicks, not a bad place to start for a country duo. Toss in plentiful two-part harmonies, a few ringing love songs ("The Coast"), the odd woodsy Band-like ballad ("See You in the Spring," with Jakob Dylan) and some gorgeous guitar-and-violin folk songs ("April's Love"), and it adds up to one of the year's better country records. Natalie Maines' feistiness is missed, but Robison, who wrote most of the songs, has a way with a hook – and those harmonies make even the weepiest weepers go down smooth.

JODY ROSEN

**Key Tracks:** "April's Love," "See You in the Spring"



# TOP SINGLES

## Tobacco, feat. Beck ★★★½ "Fresh Hex"

[myspace.com/tobacco](http://myspace.com/tobacco)

That freaky guy from Black Moth Super Rainbow sets his synth-rock ray gun to stun and blasts out a monstrous groove, with Beck spitting verses like a Sesame Street ad for the letter C. There's "concrete," "corduroy," a "coliseum" and a "canary in a coal mine." But points off for "Kotex," dude. **W.H.**

## Hot Chip

★★★★½

"She Wolf" *Leaked*

"There's a she-wolf in the closet/Let it out so it can breathe": Shakira's megahit is perfect for these U.K. dandies, who let out their she-wolves as they turn it into an electro-pop banger. They also flip the "SOS" chant with a nod to the Police's "Message in a Bottle," just to remind you LCD Soundsystem aren't the only smarties on the dance floor. **W.H.**

## Elton John

★★★★

"Never Too Old"

*You Tube*

John debuted this piano ballad from his upcoming album of duets with Leon Russell on a recent South African tour. It's a rare thing in pop, a love song for people long in the tooth ("You're never too old to hold somebody"), but the classic Goodbye Yellow Brick Road-style melody will appeal to everybody. **ANDY GREENE**

## Scissor Sisters

★★★★½

"Invisible Light"

[scissorsisters.com](http://scissorsisters.com)

On this trance-y preview of the Scissor Sisters' third album, singer Jake Shears drops his usual Freddie Mercury impression in favor of a deep-throated New Wave-y vocal about "the doors of Babylon" and an "opiate utopia." Welcome back to the future, Sisters! **ERIKA BERLIN**



Jagger and Keith Richards, 1971

## Unearthed and Rebuilt: A Lost 'Exile' Track

The Rolling Stones ★★★★★ "Plundered My Soul" *iTunes*

The whole idea of an unreleased tune from the *Exile on Main Street* sessions is like hearing somebody dug up video footage of Jesus skateboarding. The Stones have always been circumspect to a fault when it comes to digging around in their vaults – even their *Rarities 1971-2003* compilation offered barely a scrap that fans didn't already own. But "Plundered My Soul" is an intact song, a relatively together *Exile*

outtake that chugs along in the torn-and-frayed R&B mode of "Tumbling Dice" or "Soul Survivor," with heavily refurbished production and overdubs. Mick Jagger's vocal is brand-new, but that lyric is extremely 1972, as he moans, "I do miss your quick repartee," over guitars you could catch dysentery from. In other words, this is the real deal. Hit the halfpipe, Jesus.

**ROB SHEFFIELD**

## Mary J. Travels to Mordor

Mary J. Blige ★★½ "Stairway to Heaven"

★★★★½ "Whole Lotta Love" *All major services*



Blige onstage in New York

Mary J. Blige, the queen of hip-hop soul, taking on the Led Zep songbook? As Robert Plant might say, the forest will echo with drama! Nobody else but Mary J. would have the *cojones* to cover the most sacrosanct of classic-rock epics, "Stairway to Heaven." And she assembled quite the bizarre band for the job: Steve Vai, Travis Barker, Orianthi and *American Idol*'s Randy Jackson on bass. It can't touch the original, but it gets points for all-out surrealism, especially when Blige starts belting about the piper leading us to reason. She's on sturdier ground with "Whole Lotta Love," vamping it up ("Waaay down insiiide! Hon-naaay!") to a very 1985 synth-rock beat. There's definitely an element of crazy to both tracks – but if you're going to try covering a Zeppelin song, crazy is the only way to go. Her next move? Here's hoping for "Bohemian Rhapsody." **R.S.**

## BOOTLEG

### Faith No More

Soundwave Festival, Sydney, Australia February 21st, 2010

Time can make even the edgiest music sound quaint – and yes, there's a whiff of "I Love the Nineties" datedness in the reunited FNM's stiff-bottomed funk. But the majestic insanity of frontman Mike Patton is as pleasingly unnerving as ever, whether he's crooning Peaches and Herb's "Reunited" or channeling Cujo



Patton

on "Surprise! You're Dead!" As dudes on this clear audience tape keep saying, "Fuck, yeah."

**BRIAN HIATT**

### The Who

Royal Albert Hall, London March 30th, 2010

According to Pete Townshend, this London charity gig could be the Who's final show. If so, they're going out on a high with this complete performance of 1973's *Quadrophenia*. They've never recovered from the loss of John Entwistle's thunderous bass, and Roger Daltrey's voice ain't what it used to be – but Eddie Vedder's intense version of "The Punk and the Godfather" shows their legacy is safe, and the finale of "Love, Reign O'er Me" still gives chills. **A.G.**



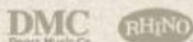
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B.o.B ★★½

B.o.B Presents: The  
Adventures of Bobby Ray  
*Rebel Rock/Grand Hustle/Atlantic*  
**Hipster MC enlists all-star  
crew, gets sunk by bad lyrics**



Atlanta MC Bobby Ray's debut album can be filed next to those by Wale and Kid Cudi: He's a left-of-center rap hero whose skills lag somewhere several miles south of his hipster bona fides. The guest list is formidably diverse: Janelle Monáe, T.I., Eminem, Rivers Cuomo, Paramore's Hayley Williams. The beats are quirky and peppy. (Check out Dr. Luke's power-pop-rap hybrid, "Magic.") B.o.B's got a Georgia drawl and tasty flow, but his witless boasts - "I sing just like Aretha/So respect me like I'm Caesar"; "When I'm up on the stage, they sangin'/But as soon as I step off, they hatin'" - leave you wondering what on Earth the bloggers are fussing about.

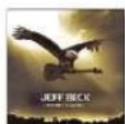
JODY ROSEN

**Key Tracks:** "Nothin' on You," "Magic"

Jeff Beck ★★½

Emotion & Commotion  
*Atco/Rhino*

**Guitar swami does Screamin'**  
**Jay Hawkins, Puccini**



Jeff Beck's emotive electric guitar has always had a voicelike quality. So it's fascinating to hear the ex-Yardbird bounce off singers here. Beck brings out the nastiness in U.K. soul mama Joss Stone, and he does an operatic pas de deux with coloratura soprano Olivia Safe; on a wordless "Corpus Christi Carol," he conjures the swoops of late singer Jeff Buckley, who famously covered it. But orchestral arrangements lard things down, and the variety, while admirable, makes for a scattered listen. Its best bits recall the laser focus of his 1975 classic, *Blow by Blow*, which is always worth revisiting.

WILL HERMES

**Key Tracks:** "I Put a Spell on You," "Elegy for Dunkirk"

Slash ★★½

Slash *Dik Hayd*

**Everyone's favorite metal  
survivor calls in some favors**



It's the anti-*Chinese Democracy*. If Axl's masterwork was a solitary quest for perfection, Slash's solo debut is a freewheeling group hug. The former G n' R guitarist doesn't sing, of course, but his snake pit runneth over with all-star cameos. Wolfmother's Andrew Stockdale gets his Zep on, Fergie plays Eighties metal vixen, Adam Levine massages a ballad, Ozzy phones one in from the depths, Lemmy barks some Seventies punk, Iggy slithers, Grohl crushes. Slash didn't need to give two songs to his hammy touring vocalist Myles Kennedy, but the guy's Axl-scat is pretty tight. Sure, the songs are Velvet Revolver-minus, but every solo Slash plays is like a crotch-rocket ride to the corner of Fire Street and Hair Boulevard.

JON DOLAN

**Key Tracks:** "By the Sword," "Promise"

New  
Pornographers  
★★★★½

Together *Matador*

**Neko Case + bittersweet  
tunes = best Pornos in years**



A.C. Newman wanted his band's fifth album to "bridge the gap between Led Zeppelin and [Sixties psych-soul band] the Fifth Dimension." *Together* doesn't quite pull that off, but it is the Canadian-American group's best since 2000's *Mass Romantic*, scoring nerdy AM gold with a mix of Anglophile harmonies, string parts and Hollies-ish melodies. The other hero is Neko Case, who gives emotional punch to "Crash Years," where she trains her siren's voice on an elegantly bummed chorus. Like much of *Together*, it's ornate, idiosyncratic and bittersweet all at once.

CHRISTIAN HOARD

**Key Tracks:** "Crash Years," "My Shepherd," "Moves"



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U.K. singer with a Tina Turner-ish howl turns out one of the most original retro-soul records in years: thumping garage rock, doo-wop chords and Spectorian girl-group stylings. Even the breakup songs sound like rave-ups.

### Merle Haggard

#### I Am What I Am

*Vanguard*  
Country giant shakes his fist, tugs heartstrings and cracks on this collection of new honky-tonk classics. Dark highlight: "I've Seen It Go Away," a raw-boned prophecy of national decay.

### Iggy and the Stooges

#### Raw Power: Deluxe

Edition *Columbia/Legacy*

A punk-rock classic gets fiercer, as this reissue restores the wild 1972 mix by Iggy Pop and David Bowie, adding a fun house of outtakes and footage as extras.

### Coheed and Cambria ★★

#### Year of the Black Rainbow

*Columbia*

More D&D fantasia from New York emo-prog outfit



Generation Y's version of Rush, these New York prog-rockers have used their

yowling albums to chronicle the Amory Wars saga, an epic sci-fi fantasia involving a 78-planet solar system called Heaven's Fence and . . . oh, never mind. Storywise, Album Five is as labyrinthine as ever: A deluxe version comes with a 352-page novel co-written by frontman Claudio Sanchez. Musically, though, it's the same old mix of impressive musicianship and arena-size agita. Coheed sometimes write a fetching tune – see the tender ballad "Far" – but *Rainbow* feels both silly and retrograde. **C.H.**

**Key Tracks:** "Far," "Guns of Summer," "The Broken"

### Jakob Dylan

★★★

#### Women and Country

*Columbia*

Bob's son finds his own rootsy voice



On his last album (and solo debut), the spare, folksy *Seeing Things*, Jakob

Dylan attracted a slew of comparisons to his father, Bob – but for once, they felt earned, and, ironically, Jakob finally sounded comfortable in his own skin. He takes it a step further here, with Neko Case and her bandmate Kelly Hogan providing gentle harmonies, and superproducer T Bone Burnett giving this roots folk a roomy sound. Dylan's gentle croon doesn't pull every tune off – particularly dark songs like the Tom Waits-y "Lend a Hand." But the cheerful lullaby "Nothing but the Whole Wide World" suggests Dylan is at his best when he embraces his inner James Taylor. **C.H.**

**Key Track:** "Nothing but the Whole Wide World"

### Flying Lotus

★★★

#### Cosmogramma

*Warp*  
Thom Yorke's fave beatmaker builds android hip-hop



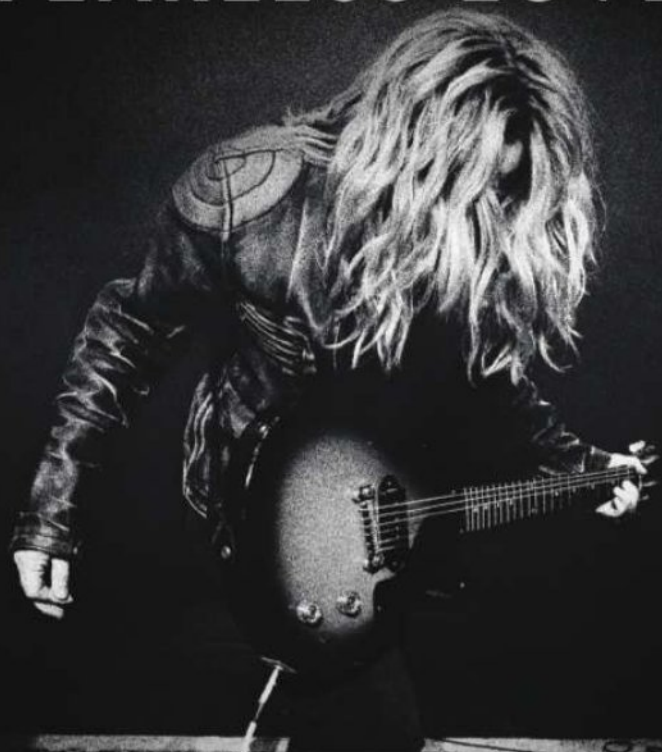
He's related to John Coltrane, he's tight with Thom Yorke, so it's fitting that

L.A. hip-hop surrealist Steven Ellison is a restless experimenter with an ear for forlorn beauty. The shape-shifting tracks on his third disc incorporate braying dub-step beats, nature-film-soundtrack atmospherics, fern-bar R&B and free jazz, often on top of each other. There's some info overload, but Ellison is an ace with pacing, and a distracted soulfulness guides the frantic lap-top science. When Yorke emerges to moan, "I need to know you're out there," on "... And the World Laughs With You," he offers what might be an epigram for the album. **J.O.**

**Key Tracks:** "Do the Astral Plane," "Zodiac Shit"

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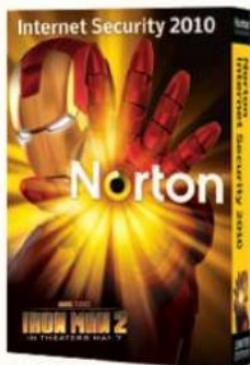
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## REVIEWS MUSIC

### Solomon Burke

★★★★

Nothing's Impossible

E1 Music

Burke keeps his late-career revival rolling



Philly-born R&B singer-songwriter-under-taker Solomon Burke has been on a revival roll since 2002's *Don't Give Up On Me*. *Nothing's Impossible* marks his debut with late Memphis producer Willie Mitchell and the latter's final album – which would be just promo copy if the result wasn't so worthy of both men's legacies. Mitchell's arrangements recall his best work with Al Green, all glowing strings, supple horns and understated guitar licks. Burke, working a lower register than Green's, pushes his voice, here getting his hot gospel on, there teasing the words "love," "dream" and "screeeee-am" into microdramas. It's the beginning, and end, of a great partnership.

WILL HERMES

**Key Tracks:** "Dreams," "It Must Be Love"

### Roky Erickson With Okkervil River

★★★★½

True Love Cast Out All Evil

Anti-

Sixties acid rocker renews himself with indie dudes



Roky Erickson has been truly out of this world with Sixties Texan acid rockers the Thirteenth Floor Elevators; he's also seen hell up close over decades of mental illness only recently ended. But he sings with renewed strength and even sweetness in these new versions of songs from the Seventies height of his troubles. Producer Will Sheff and his band Okkervil River are an impressive young Elevators in "John Lawman" and the feedback tumult of "Goodbye Sweet Dreams." The greater trip is how Erickson looks back through the wilderness in "Forever" with serenity and that shiver in his voice intact.

DAVID FRICKE

**Key Tracks:** "John Lawman," "Goodbye Sweet Dreams"

### Gogol Bordello

★★★★½

Trans-Continental Hustle

American Recordings

Raucous New York gypsy punks meet Rick Rubin



After a decade-plus as bare-knuckle contenders for World's Most Riotous Live Band, Gogol Bordello step up their studio game with producer Rick Rubin, who knows how to give pop shape to reactor-grade energy. Everyone is on point: Accordion and fiddle rock as hard as guitars and drums; rhythms from Brazil (frontman Eugene Hütz's new home) blend with breakneck Eastern European dances and D.C.-style hardcore. Rubin pushes Hütz's poignant broken English up front: "May the sound of our contaminated beat," he sings, "sweep all the Nazi purists off their feet." Word.

W.H.

**Key Track:** "We Comin' Rougher (Immigraniada)"

### Cypress Hill

★★★★½

Rise Up Priority/EMI

Stoner-rap kings still know how to smoke 'em



With its two Tom Morello rap-rock tracks and lefty-punk cover art, the first Cypress Hill record in six years promises radical reinvention. Sure, 70 million bong hits have rendered B-Real and Sen Dog confused political theorists (complaining about taxes during a recession? What up, Glenn Beck?). But when they write what they know, they strike a nice balance between visions of bong-water Armageddon and Nineties light-'em-up boom-bap. "Armada Latina" big-ups the Cuban Revolution over a salsa bounce and a sample of CSN's "Suite: Judy Blue Eyes" like a big sunny grin scrawled on an old Che poster.

JON DOLAN

**Key Tracks:** "Armada Latina," "Day Destroys the Night"



## Keane ★★ ★★

Night Train *Cherrytree*

Angsty U.K. rockers unearth inner dance-poppers



Keane collaborating with rappers? On their fourth album, the erstwhile Brit-pop whimperers join forces with K'Naan on "Stop for a Minute," where the Canadian MC rhymes while Tom Chaplin belts out one of the band's patented big, cresting choruses. Even better – and weirder – is "Ishin Denshin," a sprightly synth-propelled ditty with vocal help from Japanese baile-funk singer Tigarrah. Elsewhere, there is brass-bolstered soul, electro-flavored dance pop and other un-Keane-like songs. The band can still deliver the angsty goods (check out the gusty "My Shadow"), but Keane have proved themselves masters of – *gasp!* – pop perkiness.

JODY ROSEN

**Key Tracks:** "Ishin Denshin," "Clear Skies"

## DVDS

### Rock 'n' Roll High School

★★★★ *Shout! Factory*



Part camp, pure rock & roll, this low-budget 1979 classic featuring the Ramones gets the upgrade it deserves with a new DVD transfer plus interviews with director Allan Arkush and legendary producer Roger Corman. The Ramones compensate for their bad acting with their greatest performances caught on film; the opening scene where the entire student body erupts into frantic dancing when "Sheena Is a Punk Rocker" hits the school PA is as inspired as the film's literally explosive ending.

BARRY WALTERS

### You Really Got Me: The Story of the Kinks ★★ *MVD Visual*



There's some rare Kinks footage here – mid-Sixties black-and-white clips of Ray Davies classics like "Till the End of the Day" buoyed by snarling brother Dave's "I'm a Lover Not a Fighter," a garage-y jam on "Milk Cow Blues" and a performance of the countrified "Death of a Clown."

But this is more of an unauthorized clip job than a real film, with a lot of bad cuts and a narrator who sounds like he moonlights for the Home Shopping Network.

MARK KEMP



**BAD EDUCATION**  
The Ramones in Rock 'n' Roll High School

### Frank Zappa: The Freak-Out List ★★ ★★ 1/2 *MVD Visual*



Inside the cover of the Mothers of Invention's 1966 debut, *Freak Out!*, Zappa listed 179 of his biggest influences. This doc delves into those artists – from Igor Stravinsky to R&B guys like Johnny "Guitar" Watson – for insights into Zappa's attempts to fuse high and low culture. Using avant-garde film footage, rare live clips and a laundry list of Zappa experts, *List* is a fascinating trip into the eclectic roots of one of rock's most polarizing, pioneering figures.

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# Movies

BY PETER TRAVERS

## DONUT BREAK

Downey takes a respite from saving the world.



## Iron on the Fire

Can Robert Downey Jr. heat up a sequel to blow away every movie around this summer?

### Iron Man 2

★★★★

Robert Downey Jr., Mickey Rourke, Sam Rockwell

Directed by Jon Favreau

IT MUST BE A JUMBO-ASS pain cooking up a sequel to a movie everyone effing loved the first time. *Iron Man* wasn't just a big, ballsy, \$318 million box-office jackpot in 2008. It reinvented Robert Downey Jr. as an action hero and a genuine movie star. *Iron Man 2* – total blast that it is – doesn't jazz us with the thrill of discovery. But we do have Downey, still exuding his irresistible loose-cannon vibe in a Hollywood product that'll whup every summer 2010 epic that dares to take it on. Downey is actually better and bug-fuckier than ever, even when the movie buries him in unnecessary clutter. Too many stunts, too many subplots, too many villains jammed in from the Marvel Comics universe, too many romping, stomping, clanking iron armies.

Screw it. *Iron Man 2* knows how to jump the hurdles and have you smacking your lips

**FEMME FATALE**  
Sexy Scarlett Johansson as Black Widow



for more. For that, all credit to Downey. As Tony Stark, the playboy weapons-manufacturer-turned-pacifist-superhero, Downey never tries to be likable, like Tobey Maguire as Spider-Man, or to throw a pity party for himself, like all the actors who climb into the Batman suit. Downey plays Stark like the horny, hard-drinking, self-destructive narcissist he is. Stark likes his life on the edge. He knows the shrapnel-wounded heart that fuels him is also killing him little by little. And he gets off on it.

The secret of the *Iron Man* film franchise is that Stark is always more compelling outside the suit than he is in it. Cover him up, and all you have is heavy metal. Downey knows this intuitively. Lucky for *Iron Man 2*, returning director Jon Favreau (*Swingers*, *Elf*) has the same up-for-anything spirit as his star. Whenever the plot threatens to go conventional and sugary, these bad boys turn on the sass. They're twisted siblings under the skin.

As for the plot machinery, it's just that. Hear it grind. *Iron*

*Man 2* catches up with Stark in midcrisis. The U.S. wants to turn his Iron Man armor into a weapon. So do Russia, Iran and North Korea. Tony won't let his invention fall into the wrong hands despite attacks from Senator Stern (Garry Shandling doing sleaze to perfection) and Bill O'Reilly (the real one), who question his patriotism. Tony says no one is close to catching up with him.

Ha! Enter Ivan Vanko, a.k.a. Whiplash, a Russian killing machine played by Mickey Rourke like his *Wrestler* character after a massive case of tattoo poisoning. Rourke is a bloody wonder, spitting out his lines in an outrageous Russian accent to rival John Malkovich in *Rounders*. To hear

### PETER TRAVERS' SUMMER MOVIE PREVIEW

The *A-Team*, *Inception* and other must-see blockbusters – plus the ones to avoid like the plague, at [rollingstone.com](http://rollingstone.com)



Vanko pine for his parrot (“Vere ees my boird?”) is comic bliss. Rourke, too good an actor to slide by on silliness, invests Vanko with human dimensions. Hardened by his time in prison, he blames Stark for the death of his father and for stealing his invention.

In the movie’s killer stunt sequence, Vanko – decked out as Whiplash with two springloaded electromagnetic whips extending from his arms – confronts Stark at the Monaco Grand Prix. Stark is handed a briefcase by his Girl Friday, Pepper Potts (Gwyneth Paltrow, pretty but wasted), and it morphs into Iron Man armor. Very cool. But Whiplash is a formidable opponent. I won’t spoil what happens, but prepare to be knocked for a loop.

Rourke is more than enough of an adversary for one movie. He and Downey, playing fatherless boys who can’t grow up, are a dynamite team. But *Iron Man 2* isn’t content with one bad guy. There’s also Justin Hammer (Sam Rockwell), the industrialist who wants to steal Stark’s thunder by putting Vanko on his payroll. Rockwell is a hoot, glorying in being slimy and soulless, like Stark before his conversion.

So far, so serviceable. Then it’s overload. A sleek Scarlett Johansson shows up as Natalie Rushman, a.k.a. Black Widow, working for Stark Industries but really engaged in espionage in the employ of S.H.I.E.L.D., under the direction of Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson). Who can Stark trust? His military friend Lt. Col. James “Rhodey” Rhodes (Terrence Howard in the first *Iron Man*, now replaced by Don Cheadle) is constructing



**NIGHTMARE MAN**  
Jackie Earle Haley  
has a go at Freddy  
Krueger.

his own War Machine, a robot outfitted with every weapon in the army’s arsenal. Whiplash, in league with Hammer, goes War Machine one better by building an entire droid army. Before you know it, the clank, clank, clank has robbed the film of intimacy in the name of spectacle, with AC/DC on the soundtrack shooting to thrill.

For some, it will be a fair trade-off. It took four writers to construct the first *Iron Man*. Responsibility for the sequel fell to just one man, Justin Theroux, who co-wrote *Tropic Thunder*, the comedy that earned Downey (in blackface) an Oscar nomination. Theroux clearly knows Downey’s verbal rhythms. He also knows that Stark is a man hurting inside. That pain gives us a rooting interest. Favreau supplies the go-go-go that makes the movie stratospherically enter-

taining, even without 3-D. But it’s the promiscuously talented Downey who adds the grace notes that make *Iron Man 2* something to remember.

## A Nightmare on Elm Street ★½

Jackie Earle Haley

Directed by Samuel Bayer

DO WE REALLY NEED A REMAKE of Wes Craven’s 1984 horror classic that spawned six sequels? Michael Bay, one of the producers and a genius at crass, knew in his cynical soul that a few more bucks could be squeezed out of Freddy Krueger – the deadly dream-stalker of the scissorhands, fedora, striped sweater and jones for preying on tender young flesh. The movie’s one inspired idea was casting Jackie Earle Haley as the character created by Robert Englund. Haley, a child actor who launched an Oscar-nominated comeback as a pedophile in 2006’s *Little Children*, rips into the role with relish. It’s too bad the script turns him into a deadpan joke machine. It took two or three films for the first franchise to devolve into silliness. Craven’s first film kept Freddy creepily in the shadows not crackling wise. Many remember the first *Elm Street* as the debut of Johnny Depp playing one of Freddy’s young victims. Kyle Gallner, Thomas Dekker and Rooney Mara better get better jobs on their résumés pronto if they hope to register on a Depp level. All that’s required of them here is to look pretty while they’re slaughtered. The new *Elm Street* marks the feature-directing debut of music video whiz Samuel Bayer (Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit,” Green Day’s “Boulevard of Broken Dreams”). But it’s the Bay touch you feel in the way actors register as body count,

characters go undeveloped, and sensation trumps feeling. A nightmare, indeed.

## Mother and Child ★★★

Annette Bening, Naomi Watts, Kerry Washington

Directed by Rodrigo Garcia

DYNAMITE PERFORMANCES from Annette Bening and Naomi Watts ignite this strong drama from writer-director Rodrigo Garcia. Bening, at her blistering best, plays Karen, a physical therapist who was 14 when she gave up her daughter for adoption. Thirty-five years later, Karen has still frozen herself off from feeling, even when Paco (Jimmy Smits), a compassionate colleague, attempts to get close. Watts portrays Elizabeth, the daughter Karen has never met but who shares her mother’s bitterness. Elizabeth is a hotshot lawyer, but it’s clear that she feels shortchanged by life. Control is what she prizes above all things. When Elizabeth initiates an affair with Paul (a subtly nuanced portrait by Samuel L. Jackson), her widower boss, it’s on her terms. The sex scene between these two can fairly be called chillingly erotic. The plot escalates along with the film’s emotive temperature when Elizabeth becomes pregnant. Garcia also introduces a third woman to the mix. She’s Lucy (Kerry Washington), a childless married woman who turns to the adoption market with a vengeance. It’s through the stories of these three women that Garcia examines parenthood from oblique angles that barely intersect but yield reservoirs

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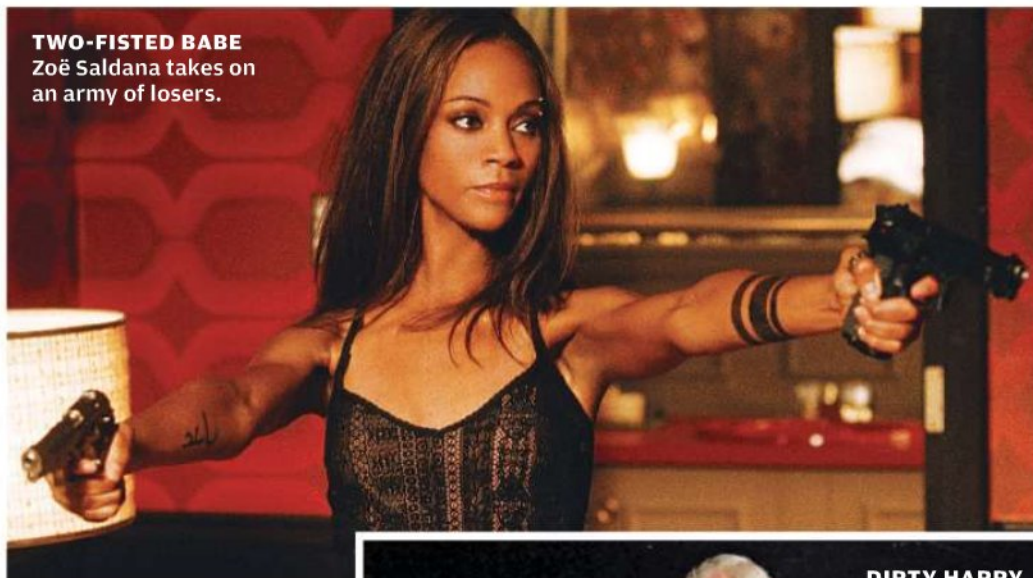


**RUSSIAN VILLAIN**  
Mickey Rourke has  
his own iron.



### TWO-FISTED BABE

Zoë Saldana takes on an army of losers.



of feeling. Garcia, acclaimed for the features *Things You Can Tell Just by Looking at Her* and *Nine Lives* and his work on the HBO series *In Treatment*, takes the time to build character. In *Mother and Child*, he creates an emotional powerhouse.

## The Losers

★★★½

Zoë Saldana, Chris Evans, Jeffrey Dean Morgan and Jason Patric

Directed by Sylvain White

AS AN ACTION FIX TO HOLD you before the summer explosions start, you could do worse than *The Losers*. It's no more than an efficient time-killer. But say this for director Sylvain White's movie version of the DC/Vertigo comic-book series from writer Andy Diggle and the artist Jock – this baby knows how to laugh at itself.

Jeffrey Dean Morgan, the immortal Dead Denny on *Grey's Anatomy*, stars as Clay, the leader of an elite Special Forces unit on a mission in the Bolivian jungle. When Clay and his boys – Jensen (Chris Evans), Roque (Idris Elba), Pooch (Columbus Short) and Cougar (Óscar Jaenada) – are double-crossed by CIA agent Max (a sassy, sardonic Jason Patric), they hatch a revenge plot that nearly gets them all killed. Of course. Why do the damn thing otherwise?

For spice, add Zoë Saldana (*Avatar*'s blue goddess) as a hottie operative with her own agenda, political and sexual. The wussy PG-13 rating ham-



**DIRTY HARRY**  
Michael Caine shows no mercy to his enemies.

pers the nutjob of a script by James Vanderbilt (*Zodiac*) and certified wildman Peter Berg (*Very Bad Things*). Still, the actors keep pushing. Evans, the Human Torch in *Fantastic Four* and next up as Captain America, gets just the right blend of humor and hardass

into his role. Disguised as an IT guy, earbuds in and humming Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'," he blows away an office full of baddies in a splashy bullet ballet. Tasty. Evans is the driving spirit of a less-than-winning movie that timidly loses its nerve.

## Harry Brown ★★

Michael Caine

Directed by Daniel Barber

PICTURE THE OLD COOT Clint Eastwood played in *Gran Torino* as Harry Brown, a retired Brit widower (Michael Caine) who's mad as hell and not going to take it anymore. Caine is a marvel of an actor, a master of artful nuance. But in this movie he is at war with a script that reduces everything to its crudest elements. No sooner is Harry's best mate, Leonard (David Bradley), a fellow veteran of the Royal Marines, killed by a gang of hoods than quiet, dignified Harry is making like Charles Bronson in *Death Wish*. The cops, led by Emily Mortimer and Charlie Creed-Miles, are no help. So Harry comes out firing. His victims are all set up as drug-dealing, gang-raping, unwashed scum. London rapper Ben Drew has a high old time playing the scummiest scum of them all. He's hissable on sight. The better for us to snicker when Harry offs them. "You failed to maintain your weapon, son!" says this geriatric dirty Harry. In *Gran Torino*, Eastwood took on the moral issues that screenwriter Gary Young and first-time director Daniel Barber studiously avoid. It's the difference between riveting and repellent.

## Please Give ★★★½

Catherine Keener, Oliver Platt, Rebecca Hall

Written and directed by Nicole Holofcener

Bare breasts, young and old, pert and drooping, fill the screen at the start of *Please Give*, an unnervingly hilarious and heartfelt comedy of bad manners from writer-director Nicole Holofcener. As you'd probably guess from that mammogram montage, the film takes you in directions you don't see coming, which makes it rare and remarkable just for starters. *Please Give* stars Catherine Keener, as do all of Holofcener's films so far (*Walking and Talking*, *Lovely and Amazing*, *Friends With Money*). The glorious Keener, incapable of a false move or a bullshit line reading, plays Kate, a New Yorker who runs a furniture store with her husband, Alex (a sublimely funny and touching Oliver Platt). "We buy from the children of dead people," notes Alex dryly. Their business is thriving, which makes Kate feel guilty. She doles out money to the homeless in increasingly large bills. Guilt defines Kate's feelings about her job, her insecure teen daughter (Sarah Steele), her roving husband and her neighbor Andra (the comically appalling Ann Guilbert), an old lady whose death will mean that Kate and Alex can



**WHEELER DEALERS**  
Catherine Keener and Oliver Platt

annex her apartment and make theirs bigger. Andra's unmarried granddaughters, shy Rebecca (the ever-amazing Rebecca Hall) and provocative Mary (a flinty Amanda Peet), know that is Kate's master plan. A dinner party to melt the frost in honor of Andra's birthday is an uproarious disaster. No fair saying more about a movie that transacts delicate business with such dazzling skill. The pitch-perfect performances help Holofcener stir up feelings that cut to the heart of what defines an ethical life. There's no movie around right now with a subject more pertinent. It'll hit you hard.



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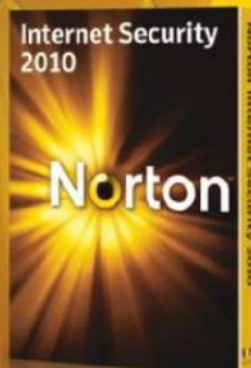
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## AIRPLANE THIEF

[Cont. from 63] “He never had the love he needed,” says Harley Ironwing. “His mom never showed him the unconditional love most parents show. She looked at him as a mess-up or something. He confided in his animals, because they would listen to him. Dog may be man’s best friend, but that’s not the only thing that’s man’s best friend. A person always needs somebody they can talk to.”

The last time Pam saw her son, almost two years ago, he showed up at her house in the middle of the night and started ransacking his bedroom, looking for something. “He never told me what,” she says. It was raining, and he was soaking wet. As he started to leave, she held his arm. “Wait a minute,” she said. “Give me a hug and a kiss.” He left her standing in the doorway, her clothes damp from the embrace.

**B**Y EARLY FEBRUARY, NO ONE HAD heard a peep out of Colton in four months, and it looked as if he were folding up his wings, possibly even preparing to turn himself in. “He’s waiting until the media coverage dies down,” says Pam. “Then maybe he’ll work out a deal.” Ironwing echoes the same sentiment: “He’s in a good place, he doesn’t need to steal. I think he’ll wait until things settle down and turn himself in.”

It sounded like a good plan: Take the Hollywood money, and use whatever he didn’t give to the animal shelters to hire a good lawyer. After doing his prison time, he could still obtain a pilot’s license because FAA regulations only bar applicants with felony drug or alcohol convictions. Colton, after all, is still 19. His whole life is ahead of him. But if there’s one thing that all flying creatures have in common, it’s



that they don’t like to be cooped up.

On the evening of February 10th, just a week after Pam and Harley speculated that Colton might surrender, a Cirrus SR22 took off from Anacortes Airport, located right across the sound from Orcas Island. The plane’s transponder was squawking loud and clear, and Whidbey Island Naval Air Station – which was keeping an eye out for possible incursions into airspace surrounding the Winter

Olympics in Vancouver – tracked the tiny plane closely. The pilot, unaware of temporary FAA guidelines established just for the Olympics, had failed to turn his radio to the designated frequency. The plane, which was weaving erratically, eventually passed out of range without incident. The pilot – who police now believe was Colton – flew back to the scene of his first flight, Orcas Island Airport.

It was his best landing yet.

Airport manager Beatrice von Tobel saw the plane the next morning. The only damage was some mud in one of the wheel cowlings, probably caused by veering into the ditch between the strip and taxiway at the end of his landing. “If he had taxied in and tied the plane up, I wouldn’t have even thought twice about seeing it,” she says.

The town of Eastsound wasn’t so lucky. After exiting the plane, Colton made his way downtown, where he allegedly burglarized the Homegrown Market & Deli. He took not only \$1,200 in cash and a cheesecake – one of the items from his elaborate art collage – but also some chalk. He used it to write a message. After all, he was now an outlaw, with 20,000 Facebook fans to please, from countries as far away as Turkey and Mozambique. He drew 39 giant footprints on the red concrete floor, a trail that led right to the store’s entrance. There, he also wrote a note:

C-YA!

## KE\$HA

[Cont. from 53] pathy. “It was pretty badass, actually,” she says. “I’d park near the beach and wake up there.” Later, she lived in a squatter house near the base of Laurel Canyon. “It was right near where Jim Morrison lived, and we called it the Grand Ol’ Opry,” she says. “We’d just listen to country music all day.”

What had appeared to be a fast track to pop stardom with Dr. Luke turned into an epic struggle. Luke let her observe some Backstreet Boys recording sessions and had her sing background on Paris Hilton’s 2006 album. But when he became too busy with other clients – Katy Perry, Pink, Kelly Clarkson – Ke\$ha was left broke and on her own. Adding the dollar sign to her name was a sarcastic joke.

For the most part, her days were spent trying to get appointments with L.A. producers, but most of them hung up as soon as they learned she had no record deal. When her car broke down, she’d ride her bike to catch a train to Long Beach, where she found a sympathetic collaborator in David Gamson, formerly of Scritti Politti. “I knew she was a star,” says Gamson, who worked with Ke\$ha on the *Animal* track “Stephen.” “She’d show up every day motivated and focused. I couldn’t figure out why no one was signing her. To me, it was a no-brainer.”

In the fall of 2008, Luke finally got back in touch and moved Ke\$ha into a spare bedroom in his Beverly Hills mansion. “I have to say, he came through on everything he promised me,” she says. Occasionally they’d jet off to Sweden to work on tracks with Luke’s mentor Max Martin. One of her first projects was the hook to Flo Rida’s “Right Round”; shortly after that, they recorded “Blah Blah Blah.” “That’s the first time she started talking, in a Blondie-esque sort of way,” says Dr. Luke. “It’s something none of the other girls can do.”

Luke commissioned Ke\$ha to write a feel-good party song about hanging out with her girlfriends, which became “TiK ToK.” The lyric “Wake up in the morning feeling like P. Diddy” came from her stay at the Opry. “The house was haunted, and I hated sleeping alone,” she says. “So I’d invite my friends over to crash with me. One morning I woke up surrounded by hot chicks.” These days, Ke\$ha – who currently lives in Pebe’s Nashville home when she’s not on the road (“I think I’ll live there until I become an adult,” she says) – prefers to wake up alone. “My last boyfriend smashed my heart into a million billion pieces,” she says. “I’ve had no father figure, and I had finally trusted a man. If I were to get involved with another guy, he’d have to be pretty much the Second Coming.”

**A**T THE PALM SPRINGS CONVENTION Center, Ke\$ha emerges in a zebra-striped spandex bodysuit. Accompanied by two girls who DJ and play key-tar and a guy alternating on bass and guitar, she races through a half-hour set. “This one’s about boys who talk too fucking much,” she says, introducing “Blah Blah Blah.” During “Take It Off,” a song inspired by a visit to a tranny bar in L.A.’s Koreatown, she crawls around the stage like a predator, ending the song with a flying karate kick. Like Ke\$ha herself, her live show is a work in progress. Two weeks later, on *SNL*, her performance of “TiK ToK” – flanked by dudes in spacesuits – is widely derided as amateurish. “I was happy with the way it turned out,” she says. “Fuck cynicism. Fuck the cynics. They can say whatever they want, because I’ll be the one in the corner with my laser gloves having a dance party.”

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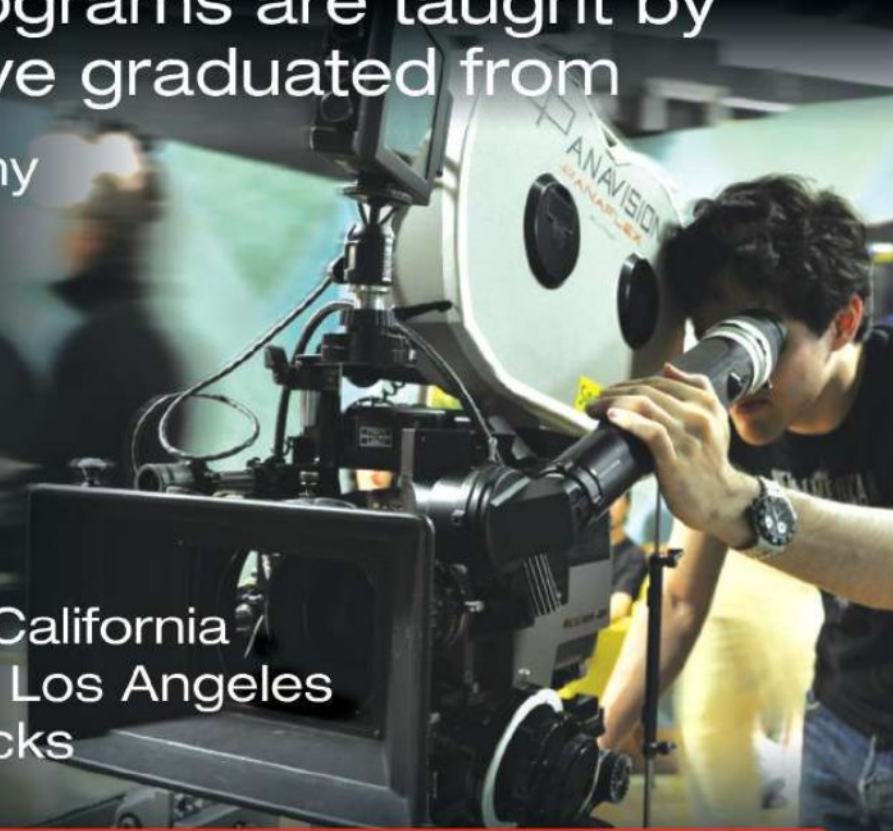
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▶ Show Production  
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The qualified candidate must possess a minimum of ten years experience in the music business, with a strong emphasis on established meaningful relationships in the music industry. Extensive knowledge of rock and roll and its related music forms is required. A Bachelor degree in related field is preferred. Must have the ability to professionally interact with major artists, performers, managers and agents.

For consideration send resume and cover letter detailing your qualifications along with salary history to: Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, 1100 Rock and Roll Boulevard, Cleveland, OH 44114-1022, Attn: Human Resources – Director of Archival Collecting or e-mail at [hr@rockhall.org](mailto:hr@rockhall.org) or fax to: (216) 515-1998. To see the detailed job description, please visit [www.rockhall.com/careers](http://www.rockhall.com/careers).

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# CHARTS

## iTunes TOP 10 TRACKS

- 1 B.o.B**  
"Nothin' on You" - Grand Hustle
- 2 Train**  
"Hey, Soul Sister" - Columbia
- 3 Taio Cruz**  
"Break Your Heart" - Island
- 4 B.o.B**  
"Airplanes" - Grand Hustle
- 5 Rihanna**  
"Rude Boy" - SRP/Def Jam
- 6 Usher**  
"OMG" - LaFace/Jive
- 7 Ke\$ha**  
"Your Love Is My Drug" - Kemosabe/RCA
- 8 Jason Derülo**  
"In My Head" - Beluga Heights
- 9 Adam Lambert**  
"Whataya Want From Me" - RCA
- 10 Justin Bieber**  
"Baby" - RBMG/Island

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## COLLEGE RADIO TOP 10 ALBUMS

- 1 Gorillaz**  
"Plastic Beach" - Virgin
- 2 Dum Dum Girls**  
"I Will Be" - Sub Pop
- 3 She and Him**  
"Volume Two" - Merge
- 4 Broken Bells**  
"Broken Bells" - Columbia
- 5 Dr. Dog**  
"Shame, Shame" - Anti-
- 6 MGMT**  
"Congratulations" - Columbia
- 7 Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings**  
"I Learned the Hard Way" - Daptone
- 8 The Apples in Stereo**  
"Travellers in Space and Time" - Yep Roc
- 9 Goldfrapp**  
"Head First" - Mute
- 10 Free Energy**  
"Stuck on Nothing" - DFA/Astralwerks



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## From the Vault

RS 186, May 8th, 1975

### TOP 10 SINGLES

- 1 Tony Orlando and Dawn**  
"He Don't Love You (Like I Love You)" - Elektra
- 2 Freddy Fender**  
"Before the Next Teardrop Falls" - ABC/Dot
- 3 B.J. Thomas**  
"(Hey Won't You Play) Another Somebody Done Somebody Wrong Song" - ABC
- 4 Ozark Mountain Daredevils**  
"Jackie Blue" - A&M
- 5 Earth, Wind and Fire**  
"Shining Star" - Columbia
- 6 The Blackbyrds**  
"Walking in Rhythm" - Fantasy
- 7 The Elton John Band**  
"Philadelphia Freedom" - MCA
- 8 Carpenters**  
"Only Yesterday" - A&M
- 9 Leo Sayer**  
"Long Tall Glasses (I Can Dance)" - Warner
- 10 Paul Anka with Odia Coates**  
"I Don't Like to Sleep Alone" - United Artists



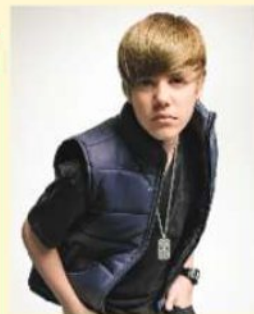
### On the Cover

"Alice Cooper's music is a form of entertainment that's a fad right now. It's going to go the way of psychedelic rock and Sixties protest songs. Alice read me saying that once and said he'd be around long enough to piss on my flowers. So I sent him some flowers."

—John Denver

## Top 40 Albums

- 1 1 Justin Bieber**  
My World 2.0 - RBMG/Island
- 2 NEW MGMT**  
Congratulations - Columbia
- 3 4 Lady Antebellum**  
Need You Now - Capitol Nashville
- 4 2 Usher**  
Raymond v Raymond - LaFace/Jive
- 5 NEW Coheed and Cambria**  
Year of the Black Rainbow - Columbia
- 6 5 NOW 33**  
Various Artists - Universal/EMI/Sony Music
- 7 7 Lady Gaga**  
The Fame - Streamline/KonLive/Cherrytree/Interscope
- 8 16 ↑ Ke\$ha**  
Animal - Kemosabe/RCA
- 9 6 Monica**  
Still Standing - J
- 10 8 Justin Bieber**  
My World (EP) - RBMG/Island
- 11 NEW Jeff Beck**  
Emotion & Commotion - Atco
- 12 19 Sade**  
Soldier of Love - Epic
- 13 11 Ludacris**  
Battle of the Sexes - DTP/Def Jam
- 14 13 Black Eyed Peas**  
The E.N.D. - Will.i.am/Interscope
- 15 20 Zac Brown Band**  
The Foundation - Roar/Bigger Picture/Home Grown/Atlantic
- 16 3 Slash**  
Slash - Dik Hayd
- 17 NEW Natalie Merchant**  
Leave Your Sleep - Big City Sisters/Nonesuch
- 18 NEW Jason Castro**  
Jason Castro - Atlantic
- 19 NEW DJ Holiday and Gucci Mane**  
Burrprint(2) HD - 1017 Brick Squad/Asylum
- 20 9 Erykah Badu**  
New Amerykah Part Two: Return of The Ankh - Control Freq/Universal Motown
- 21 18 Lady Gaga**  
The Fame Monster (EP) - Streamline/KonLive/Cherrytree/Interscope
- 22 14 Alan Jackson**  
Freight Train - Arista Nashville
- 23 17 Marvin Sapp**  
Here I Am - Verity
- 24 12 Jakob Dylan**  
Women and Country - Columbia
- 25 26 Taylor Swift**  
Fearless - Big Machine
- 26 21 Rihanna**  
Rated R - SRP/Def Jam
- 27 15 Sharon Jones and the Dap-Kings**  
I Learned the Hard Way - Daptone
- 28 NEW Laura Bell Bundy**  
Achin' and Shakin' - Mercury Nashville
- 29 NEW Straight No Chaser**  
With a Twist - Atco/Atlantic
- 30 29 Gorillaz**  
Plastic Beach - Virgin
- 31 24 Michael Bublé**  
Crazy Love - 143/Reprise
- 32 25 Lil Wayne**  
Rebirth - Cash Money/Universal Motown
- 33 22 Jimi Hendrix**  
Valleys of Neptune - Experience Hendrix/Legacy
- 34 27 She and Him**  
Volume Two - Merge
- 35 77 Adam Lambert**  
For Your Entertainment - 19/RCA
- 36 30 Miranda Lambert**  
Revolution - Columbia (Nashville)
- 37 31 Trey Songz**  
Ready - Song Book/Atlantic
- 38 35 Carrie Underwood**  
Play On - 19/Arista Nashville
- 39 57 Glee: Season One: The Music Volume 1**  
Soundtrack - 20th Century Fox TV/Columbia
- 40 34 Alicia Keys**  
The Element of Freedom - MBK/J



### Leave It to Bieber

A blitz of media appearances - including SNL - and the hit single "Baby" have helped Bieber's debut LP occupy the Number One spot for three weeks.



### MGMT Break Out

The Brooklyn psych-rock duo's 2007 debut never cracked the Top 20, but their out-there follow-up sold 66,000 copies in its first week.



### C&C Music Factory

Coheed and Cambria's fifth LP is ambitious even for prog: It's a prequel to their four-part Amory Wars rock opera that began with their 2002 debut.



### Guitar God Reborn

Beck's 10th solo album - featuring Joss Stone and a cover of "Over the Rainbow" - sold 26,000 copies in its first week, a career best.

00 Chart position on April 21st, 2010  
00 Chart position on April 14th, 2010  
NEW New Entry  
2ND Re-Entry  
↑ Greatest Gainer  
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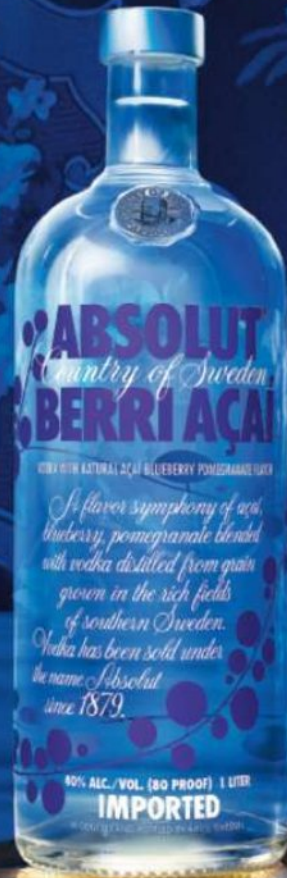


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